JORGE B. VARGAS FILIPINIANA FOUNDATION
Contributions to Philippine History
Biography Series: I

MEMOIRS OF VICTOR BUENCAMINO

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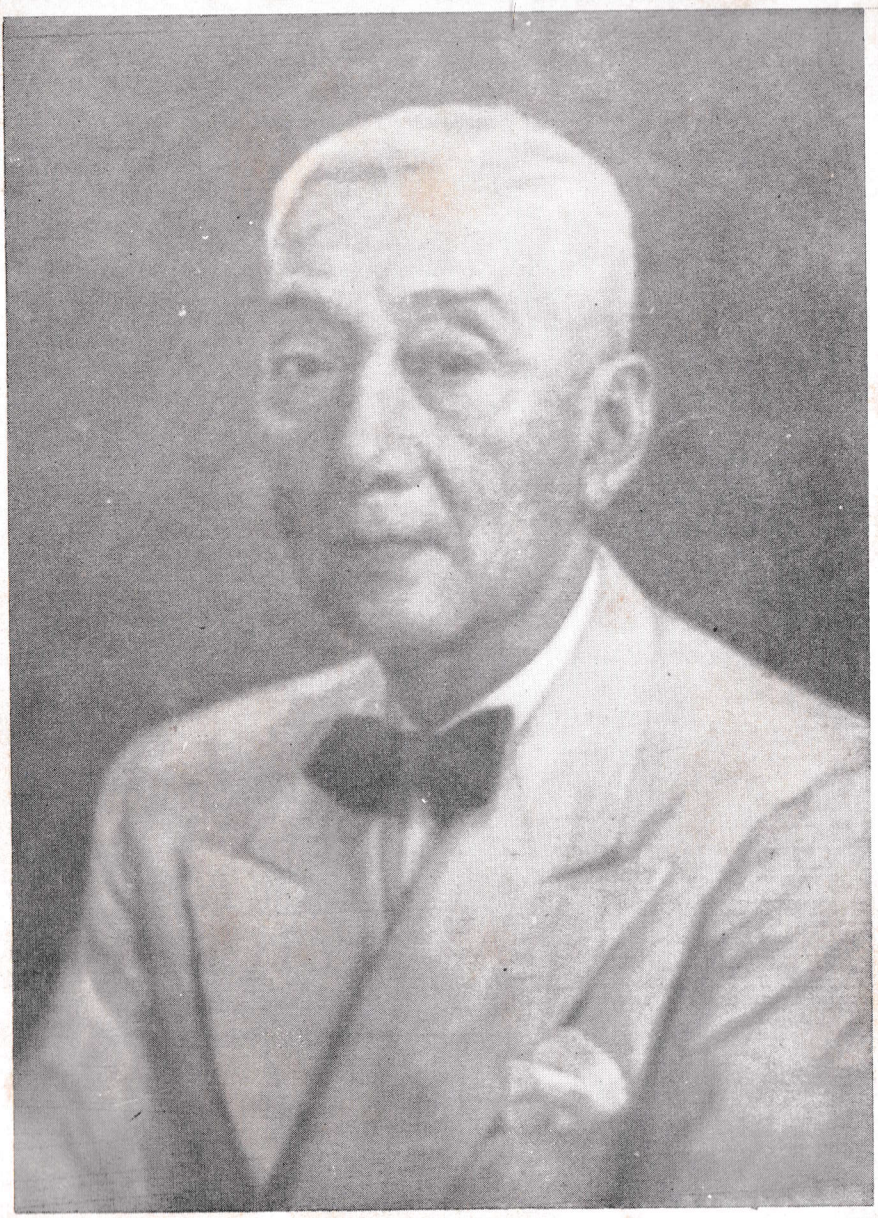
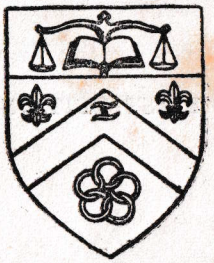


VICTOR BUENCAMINO, 1888-1977. (Oil Portrait by Fernando Amorsolo. V. Buencamino Family Estate).

Memoirs of Victor Buencamino



Mandaluyong, Metro Manila
JORGE B. VARGAS FILIPINIANA FOUNDATION
1977

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FIRST EDITION

Printed in the
Republic of the Philippines

To my wife, Lolita, to whom
I owe so much,
And to Vic and Dolly and Neneng;
And to my grandchildren;
And to the memory of Philip III.

PREFACE

I AM VERY happy to have the privilege and opportunity of writing a few words regarding these memoirs of one of the most colorful, versatile, and durable pioneers among our nation-builders who were in their prime during the first half of the 20th century.

Dr. Victor Buencamino, now nearing 89, has a remarkable memory and has diligently preserved most of his papers. His memoirs, therefore, are rich in documented details and in anecdotes that are worthy of being preserved as part of the heritage of our race.

As a human document, this book tells of the life and times of our people in a bygone era; it tells of their virtues, their foibles.

It records some hitherto unpublished morsels of history, such as how General Arthur MacArthur, father of "I-shall-return" Douglas, refused, even in his deathbed to forgive his junior colleague, General J. Franklin Bell, because, according to Arthur, Bell had done the Filipinos some injustice.

This book tells of President Manuel L. Quezon as a human being; of his loves and of his labors and lifelong fight for the freedom of his country.

It tells of the struggle of a generation of Filipinos against racial discrimination.

This book has drama and suspense. Thrice the author was on the brink of a tragic ending.

And it's a good thing that the author has included in this book some copious excerpts from the diary of his hero-son Philip whose account of the life of Filipino troopers on Bataan and Corregidor and in the Death March is, to me, one of the more unforgettable firsthand versions of our people's part in the last war.

For, on the whole, this is a happy book by one who has lived a full life through four-fifths of a century, but who is still so vigorous and so gaily young at heart.

I am grateful to Dr. Buencamino for generously giving me abundant recognition for my humble role in the story of our times. As his contemporary — he is only two years my senior — I think Dr. Buencamino has captured in his memoirs the flavor of that historic era.

During our lifelong association both in and out of the Government, Dr. Buencamino has always impressed me with his sterling qualities and impeccable behavior as a true gentleman.

In the public service, he can boast of an unassailed and enviable record of industry, honesty and dedication to duty.

As his close friend, co-worker and admirer, I do not hesitate to commend this book as a "must" to every reader.

The Jorge B. Vargas Filipiniana Foundation, of which Dr. Buencamino is one of its founding fathers, is indeed privileged to issue this book, the first of its kind to appear under its imprint.

JORGE B. VARGAS

Kawilihan, Mandaluyong
Metro Manila
15 November 1976

POSTSCRIPT TO PREFACE

This book was about to come off the press and was scheduled to be launched to the public on February 15, 1977, his 89th birthday, when Dr. Buencamino unfortunately passed away on January 1, 1977. It is a great pity that Dr. Buencamino did not live to see the final printing of his Memoirs, but it was providential that he was able to finish his manuscript just before his demise. With his passing, the Jorge B. Vargas Filipiniana Foundation has exerted every effort to have this book published as scheduled as a fitting memorial to his services to our people and to his patriotic dedication to the public good and the name Filipino.

J. B. V.

15 January 1977

FOREWORD

OVER at the round mahogany table of the Philippine Columbian Club library, my cronies and I spend many an early evening hour chewing the rag, so to speak. I enjoy these sessions immensely. My friend, Carling Fernandez, leads most of our discussions that have to do with economics, while the venerable retired Justice J. B. L. Reyes enlightens us on public affairs.

Very often, we reach a consensus on how to solve the problems of the world — all problems, that is, except our own. And when we run out of topics and juicy gossips, I often amuse the gang with little anecdotes, such as how, at 12, I was sent to the United States ostensibly as a student but, I suspect, more truly as a hostage. Most of my yarns are, by choice, of pre-World War I vintage because I feel safer knowing that none of those around me can challenge my being an authority on things that happened before they were born. That's one distinct advantage of being an octogenarian.

One day, Carling suggested that I recall as much of the past as I can remember and collect these reminiscences into a book. He was persuasive. For one thing, he is the fairy godfather of our club library and he makes me feel that I should write some kind of a memorabilia if only because I am the only surviving founder of our 69-year old Columbian Club. I am therefore the last original source of authentic Columbiania, Carling insists.

Furthermore, my cronies tell me it is not given to many to live all of eight years and eighty, and I owe it to the coming generations of Filipinos to try and capture the flavor of life and living during these perhaps the most eventful and exciting nine decades of our country's past.

My cronies were particularly insistent that I leave behind an account of any pioneering work in which I was involved. They contend that anything done for the first time is worth noting.

At first, I was reluctant. I never was a top figure in any field. But my cronies insisted that precisely because there will be chroniclers aplenty who will tell stories about top men, I should do a story to fill a gap that shall be there because historians as a rule do not bother to see the past from the eyes of an ordinary mortal.

Quite apart from the encouragement I received from my Columbian cronies, the big push that finally put this book across came from my lifelong friend, Jorge B. "George" Vargas. Among George's many useful preoccupations is the collecting of Filipiniana. In his sprawling Kawilihan compound in Mandaluyong, he has built a museum housing his varied and priceless collections. To assure a perpetual support for the maintenance and development of his museum, George has organized the Jorge B. Vargas Filipiniana Foundation. He has kindly asked me to serve as one of its trustees.

When he learned that I was thinking of doing these memoirs, George at once offered to have the book published by the Foundation. He said anything of interest that I can recall about the past is the precise type of material that he would like to collect for his Filipiniana. He even said I was a rare primary source as there are not many of our genera-

tion still living who can tell a firsthand story of what life was like in our heyday.

It was generous of George to consider this little work worthy of being enshrined in his Filipiniana collection. I consider it a distinct honor to have this book published by the Jorge B. Vargas Filipiniana Foundation.

I had had fun recalling what went into these little memoirs. I think having so much fun doing it was reason enough for coming out with the tidbits that tell the story of my life and times.

This book would not have been possible without the invaluable assistance of the following:

Tomas Valdezco and Roberto Yumul, my faithful assistants, for their recollections, researches and advice;

Vic, my son and his wife, Bessie, for his recollections and for her assistance in translating Spanish source materials that went into this book;

Lydia G. de la Cruz, my efficient Secretary, who did all the stenographic and typing work of the manuscript;

Baldomero T. "Toto" Olivera, my Columbian crony, who looked after its styling and editing.

Jorge B. "George" Vargas, Chairman-President of the Jorge B. Vargas Filipiniana Foundation, and Mauro Garcia, the Foundation's Director, for undertaking its publication.

V. B.

15 November, 1976

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1

SOME SECRETS OF LONGEVITY

As told by one who lived through a historic period of a people's struggle for a place on this planet.

I HAVE OFTEN BEEN asked as to what I ascribe the fact that at past 88 I am in fairly good health and live an active life. I can think of five things I have been doing quite consistently the past 70 years or so: I write at least a line or two in my diary everyday; I keep a personal account book; I play tennis most every afternoon; I have never missed putting in a good day's work every working day from the time I was 18 to this very day; and I have always admired beauty, especially in the female of the species.

When I record all my deeds and misdeeds in my diary at the end of the day, I am forced to do some kind of moral accounting. I feel good when I write about the good things I have done. I feel bad when I realize that I might have done something wrong. In which case, I wrestle with my conscience, ask the Almighty for forgiveness and vow to do better next time. That makes me feel much better and I sleep well, and I think that's not bad for my health at all.

I believe that my daily accounting of my personal finances is a good habit, too. You see, I'm careful with money. I'm told that as a boy, I had squandered my daily allowances in school quite freely just because, maybe, I thought my wealthy grandmother had oodles of dough. But as an adolescent in school out in the United States, I was shocked when word reached me that Lola Ninay was losing her fortunes as a result of the failure of her banking venture, and so I had to scrimp, especially as I was all alone in the campus of the University of California in Berkeley. Out there, nothing could be more miserable than being broke, especially during the cold, dreary winter nights.

Living within my means has become a religion with me. My daily balancing enables me to review where I misspent a centavo so I'll not do it again. Believe me, this is not a harmful habit, this exercise of watching where your centavos go. I'm not sorry I learned to do this quite early in life. Mostly because of this daily accounting habit, I think I have been able to manage my finances so I know I have something stashed away for the proverbial rainy day, and that comforting thought is not bad for my health, either.

And that goes for daily exercise, too. Every afternoon, weather permitting, I play tennis with my pal, Jorge "George" Vargas, 86, and several others in their 80s, too. Almost up to the time of his death, my friend, Dr. Antonio G. Sison, played tennis with us every day, and he lived to be ninety. We contend that a couple of sets of tennis every day is the best way to keep the gerontologist away.

And as for admiring beauty and working for a living, I recommend those habits, too. I think I have been so busy admiring the beautiful and working like hell that I just have not had any time to grow old.

IN ANY CASE, when I asked my cronies at the Columbian Club what they thought I should include in this account of my past, they said surely I was one of the earliest pioneers among the generation of Filipinos whose fate it was to live and work through the American half-century of rule in the Philippines and the least I could do was record any "first" in which I might have been involved.

Not that it is of any significance, but perhaps I should make of record:

1. That I was probably the first and possibly the youngest Filipino student sent at the instance of American occupation authorities to study in the United States. It is generally recognized that one of the biggest American contributions to the progress of this country was their program of mass education. It might well be that my departure for the U.S. in 1900 marked the very start of that mass education program.

2. That I was the first Filipino to earn a degree as Doctor of Veterinary Medicine.

3. That I was the first Filipino to demand — and to get — a salary rate equal to my American counterparts in the Philippine government.

4. That I was the first Filipino to become Director of the Bureau of Animal Industry.

5. That I was among those responsible for the founding and development of the College of Veterinary Science in the University of the Philippines.

6. That I was involved in the first nationwide drive to eradicate rinderpest and in the manufacture of the first anti-rinderpest serum.

7. That I established the first private Filipino veterinary hospital in the country.

8. That I was involved in the first large-scale importation of beef cattle on the hoof into the country, both from Indo-China (now Vietnam) and Australia — Northern Territory.

9. That I was the first General Manager and Vice President of the National Rice and Corn Corporation which succeeded in stabilizing the supply and price of rice from the time it was founded in 1936 till the outbreak of World War II.

10. That I am the only surviving founder of the nationalist-oriented Philippine Columbian Association which was organized in 1907.

11. And that I was in President Quezon's group which for the first time broke the color line in American-owned-and-managed places of entertainment.

And so forth, and so forth.

None of these is so terribly important, I must say, but I am told these are precedents that should be recorded if only for the benefit of curious researchers who find delight in discovering some "first."

My cronies tell me too — and I fully agree with them — that any factual account of the past also is of inestimable value to the coming generations as guide on how not to commit the mistakes that their forebears had committed before them.

That is the unfortunate lot of pioneers: without precedents to go by, they must plug along on a trial-and-error basis and are bound, of course, to make mistakes. And, looking back, I must admit that my generation of Filipinos could probably have done much better or to make ours a prouder race.

In the following pages, then, is told the story of how life was in the heyday of a Filipino who has had the good fortune of having lived through the whole historic period of the Filipinos' struggle for self-government.

I hope my cronies are right: that this is a story that deserves to be told.

2

THE PAMPERED BOY ON SAGUNTO STREET

When we slept, we closed our windows to keep out the ill-winds that killed people who sinned but did not pray hard enough.

I WOULD SAY I WAS not a typical Manila boy in my time. Most boys were allowed to play on sidewalks or in vacant lots in the neighborhood, but I wasn't. Instead, a few boys in the neighborhood, mostly from well-to-do families, came over in the afternoon after school and played with us around the fountain in the *patio* of our compound.

But the games we played were the same as those played by boys of my generation: *viola corcho* (*luksong tinik*), *tangga, siklot* and *sungka* (played with *sigay* or sea shells), *yoyo, escondite* and *patintero.*

We played until the bells of Tondo church rang the vespers when we ran to the chapel upstairs where my Lola Ninay led the prayers before the images of Santo Niño de Tondo and many other saints. In those days, the more images you had in your altar, the higher you rated in the congregation.

We prayed in Spanish, all of us in the household, including the servants. Apparently, the friars did not encourage the propagation of the prayers in the Pilipino translation. We children said our prayers aloud. We thought the louder we said our prayers, the more God and Lola Ninay liked it. I never really understood what the prayers meant, but I had all four main prayers so memorized I could rattle them all off in a flash. I still do so to this day, only I now understand what the words mean.

Lola Ninay was the grand dame of the clan, but she was too preoccupied with her businesses and her community and social activities to manage her household. So it was my auntie Adelaida who mothered me, for my mother, Guadalupe, had died while I was a month-old infant.

OUR HOUSE ON Sagunto street (later named Sto. Cristo) where I was born on 15 February 1888 was one of the biggest in that rather ritzy section of Tondo. It was a rectangular affair about 20 to 25 meters, with an *entresuelo*, a second floor and an *azotea* or roof garden. I remember that roof garden well because one early morning we climbed the narrow ladder to the top to watch what I thought then were exciting fireworks out in the bay. Our house was so tall we had a good view of the bay and of the Cavite landfall beyond.

I was told later that the fireworks were the real thing. Admiral George Dewey lobbed a few shells as his fleet breezed into the bay and the Spanish squadron soon disappeared in flames.

There were many number of parlors and bedrooms in the mezzanine and the second floor and I recall that friends of

Lola Ninay would park in these apartments for weeks on end as her house guests. It was not the custom of people then to stay in hotels. Hotels were only for foreigners. Good families felt slighted if their friends from the provinces did not honor them by staying in their homes.

There was a time some families evacuated to Sagunto from Baliwag and other Bulacan towns and from Pampanga and Bataan to avoid getting caught in the crossfire between Filipinos and Spaniards and later between Filipinos and Americans. It was a lot of fun for me because I had more evacuee children to play with.

In the back portion of the ground floor beyond the *patio* was the stable. There were about ten horses in all. I particularly liked the one that pulled our Rockaway which took us to the Ateneo in the morning and picked us up after calisthenics in the afternoon. In those days, going to school in a private four-wheeled rig was a status symbol.

Lola had a rig for all occasions. In addition to the service *carromata,* she had an *aquiles,* a *caruaje* (milord), and a vis-a-vis, a four-wheeled affair pulled by two horses with two rows of seats facing one another in the cab. Then there was the Victoria, the de-luxe version of the two-horse carriage with two drivers, usually in uniform, lashing their whips from atop. We rode in the Victoria only on gala occasions.

We were happy with these carriages and the great big horses until, one day, I sensed something was wrong. One by one, the horses were being slaughtered for food. There was no food in the Divisoria nearby because the Americans had blockaded the city and no food could come in, not even the rice which they grew in Lola Ninay's own farm in Calumpit.

Up to that time, we had plenty to eat. There were full meals, even for breakfast: *kare-kare, puchero,* chicken and eggs and all the *ensaymadas* you could eat, washed down with thick chocolate.

We were not allowed to eat fruits in the morning. Our elders said it was a sure way to get a tummy ache for fruits were heavy in the stomach.

They also told us to close our windows when we slept at night. There were lethal kinds of ill wind that blew when people sinned and didn't pray hard enough.

I remember that people prayed hard and often. During fiestas in Tondo, there were processions where people carrying lighted candles prayed aloud or sang hymns as they marched past our house. During those fiestas the whole front side of our house was lighted with giant lanterns. We kids watched the procession from our windows. We were too small to march with the *colegialas* who wore smart uniforms and sang aloud as they marched in single file on both sides of the brightly lit image of the Sto. Niño.

NEXT TO THE town fiesta, we enjoyed most our excursions to Lola Ninay's farm in Nagdasig, Calumpit. Every harvest, we watched the milling of sugar cane in the *molino de sangre,* a massive circular rock grinder that turned by the pull of a bullock or a horse. The juice flowed into a bamboo slot straight into a huge cauldron. After a couple of hours, we sampled the still fluid but cooling *panocha* by wiping the side of the kettle with our fingers.

Harvest time was fiesta time in the barrio. The younger people danced all night to the music of a *comparsa* while the

elderly folk gambled away at *monte* tables.

I was not a carefree boy too long. There was trouble with the Spaniards and then with the Americans. Our schooling was abruptly stopped and I was told that Father was out in the wars. I seldom saw him. I could sense the air of danger in the household. Sure enough one day we were told Father had been captured by the Americans and pretty soon we were allowed to visit him.

But he was not in jail, really. He was in a big room in an office building in the Ayuntamiento in Intramuros. We brought him food. But he was unhappy because there were guards outside and he was not allowed to go out.

All of a sudden, Father came home one day. He was excited. He said the Americans had befriended him and told him he could send his sons to the United States to study if he wanted to. I learned later that the Americans made friends with Father because they needed his help in the pacification campaign.

My brother Philip and I were then 13 and 12, respectively. My Lola Ninay said we were too young to go away. But Father was stubborn. One day we sailed away.

3

LEARNING THE PALMETA WAY

Naughty boys got flogged — the more times the graver the offense.

I WAS EXPELLED from the Ateneo. I was fired because I dared call a trainee priest *ladron*. I had a good reason for calling him a thief. He had grabbed my noise maker and, even as a kid — I must have been about eight then — I was not one to allow anyone to grab from me anything that was mine.

His name, that I recall, was Brother Añon. I think he was one of those Spaniards doing time at the Ateneo as assistant mentor or something in preparation for priesthood.

It was one of those convocation affairs where kids doing well in school were awarded medals or something. I was not one of them. I recall distinctly the chap receiving so many medals that afternoon — Emiliano Tria Tirona. He was a bright boy from Cavite. (In the 20s he went on to become a leader of the opposition Democrata party in the Senate.)

Well, we kids cheered loud and long everytime Emiliano went up the stage to receive another medal. But I had a better idea. Instead of just clapping, I unbottoned the black

of the bay splashed right onto Malecon during the rough season. All of today's Port area had not been reclaimed then, and at low tide, the shore was a muddy mess. Ships pulled up along the shores of the Pasig river, all the way to the side of the Bridge of Spain which linked Calle Nueva to the Parian gate.

I had pleasant memories of us kids, resplendent in our white long pants, blue jackets and blue caps to match, lined up in twos of a clear afternoon after classes making *paseo* to the old Luneta. Somehow, you felt you were a different personality when you were in uniform. You felt awfully important.

We were taught our three Rs and a big C at the Ateneo. C stood for catechism. And now I have to make a confession. After years of daily bout with the big C, I must admit I didn't learn anything doctrinaire. Nothing at all.

What I did memorize — just parrot without really comprehending what I was saying — were the four standard prayers:

Padre nuestro . . .
Dios te Salve, Maria . . .
Creo en Dios Padre . . .
Dios Te Salve, Reina y Madre . . .

As I said, I can rattle these prayers off without effort in 10 seconds flat even today. But with this difference: that when I like to really pray now, I say the same words but with more understanding. But more about religion anon.

As I have said, excellence was encouraged at the Ateneo with honors and medals during convocations. But in case you fell below the line, they had a not-too-gentle way of persuading you to learn your lessons.

One way was by embarrasing you. They had a placard of an ass placed around your neck and you stood in front of the class in total disgrace everytime you did anything naughty. You were called a *borrico.*

For bigger infractions, you got the *palmeta,* a piece of board shaped like a small paddle with which the teacher spanked the palm of your hand. I tell you, those *palmetas* hurt, and you'd study your lessons hard and behave like a good conformist if only to avoid getting your hand pummelled red.

But that was not the worst. In a private tutoring school to which I was later sent after running away from Letran, the lone mentor, a Maestrong Tupas, had an even more persuasive method of enforcing discipline. He made you bend over a bench face down and with a *bejuco,* a rattan whip about the size of your thumb, he'd whack your buttocks, the more times the graver the offense.

This must sound barbaric to today's rather pampered pupils. But I tell you, I'd have no serious objections to some such corporal punishment for tough kids in school. I don't know that discipline ever really hurt anyone. And I think the best time to impress the importance of discipline upon children is during their formative years in school.

4

DOÑA NINAY "SUPOT"

A pillar of a decadent society had redeeming nationalistic instincts.

I QUITE AGREE with some observations that the reason the women's lib movement never quite became a fad in this country is because the Filipina does not need to be liberated. She's in fact the ruler. And that's not a new phenomenon, either.

Take my grandmother, Doña Saturnina Salazar, for instance. She was the dominant character in our young lives and in the lives of many other people in her day. She was popularly known as "Doña Ninay Supot." It was the fashion then to label a clan, often derisively, with some distinguishing peculiarities.

Grandmother really inherited the *supot* nomenclature from her father, Don Silvestre Salazar. It seems that my great grandfather, better known as Ñor Beteng, was almost always carrying a *supot* — a money bag, actually.

For his main stock in trade was money lending, and he had to lug his *supot* along to carry those heavy Mexican silver coins which he lent to market vendors in the morning and

collected the following day. He went home with ten additional silver pesos safely tucked in his *supot* for every hundred he lent the previous dawn. And that was how Doña Ninay carried the brand, *supot,* too.

Her father went to Divisoria before the break of dawn to provide capital for stall leasees who bought their vegetables or fish or meat from wholesale suppliers in time to spread their wares for the early morning shoppers. As a rule, these vendors would make enough profits during the day to feed their families and pay my great grandfather his Shylock surcharge. But it was also a rule that what was left of the vendor's earnings would be wiped out during the night in either *monte* or *jueteng* or an endless round of *tuba*, so the vendor had to approach my great grandfather the following morning and borrow all over again at 10 per centum — per day!

Thus did the Buencamino forebears thrive. In those days, usury was as dignified an industry as today's big-time financing by reputable investment houses, today's rates being no less usurious.

AND SO, DOÑA NINAY fell heir to a fortune that the *supot* business built. But compared with her old man, Doña Ninay was big league. In time, she was ruling a conglomerate all her own: tobacco, rice, real estate — and Las Vegas-style gambling.

Befitting one so high in society, Lola Ninay circulated in the flashiest of circles. In those days those in the money had one favorite pastime: gambling. And being smarter than the rest, Lola Ninay encouraged her wealthy friends to indulge in gambling while she provided the facilities. It's debatable to this day which gave her more returns, her trading

business or her *monte* and *jueteng* operations, but whichever did so, the fact was that she was recognized as one of the better-heeled matrons in all Tondo.

I'll never forget one time she paid off a *jueteng* winner all of 75 thousand *pesillos, Mex.* Imagine that. At the present inflated and still inflating value of the peso, that take could qualify her to open a bank with today's required one-hundred-million-peso minimum capital. And she did open a bank, indeed — as I'll tell you later.

MY VIVID RECOLLECTION of Lola Ninay was her excursions to Barrio Sulipan in Apalit town, Pampanga. She took me along in a number of her forays. Lola Ninay's household where we lived was not below what you might call now the Forbes Park variety. But the nipa-thatched chateau of Capitan Joaquin Arnedo at Barrio Sulipan looked like something simply out of this world even to one used to staying in a huge townhouse.

You just didn't walk in at the Arnedo villa and place your feet at his rows of *monte* tables. No sir. You came strictly by invitation and one such invite from Capitan Joaquin was a sure mark that you had made the top rung of the day's aristocracy. Guests often included the *segundo cabo*, the vice-governor general and the Archbishop of Manila. Foreign dignitaries were often entertained there.

And of course, grandma Doña Ninay stood out among the scintillating guests.

Quite apart from being a social giant in her own right, Doña Ninay had another entree into the Monte Carlo of the Arnedos in Sulipan; she and the Arnedos had a common son-in-law.

My father's first wife, Juanita, was a daughter of the Arnedos, and after her death, Father wooed and married Doña Ninay's daughter Guadalupe (Neneng), who was to become my mother. Father seemed to have maintained a close relationship with the Arnedos even after the death of his Arnedo wife for whenever he had a very special visitor, he almost always entertained this guest at Sulipan.

For example, Dad entertained then Governor William Howard Taft at the Arnedo shangri-la. Among others, this joint was famous for its exotic cuisine, and the story is told that when Governor Taft, then already quite a hefty balloon, tasted the Arnedo's *guinatan* of mixed tubers and fruit, the man who went on to become the President of the United States devoured all of three platefuls, so delicious was the dish.

I seem to recall — of this I'm not certain — that one of the visiting firemen at Sulipan was a grand duke from Tzarist Russia.

Then there was a yarn — I wouldn't swear to its accuracy — of how the Arnedos excelled themselves when they entertained a distinguished Japanese royalty whom my father took there for a weekend.

It seems there was a tradition at that time that the highest gesture of esteem consisted in the host's not allowing any other guest to use the table items such as china, silverware, glasses and linen that had been used at the banquet for an honored guest.

So, to the great befuddlement of the Japanese guest, Capitan Joaquin, after offering the usual toast in florid language, forthwith ordered the waiters to hurl out the window unto a river nearby all the costly dinner sets that had been used to serve the Japanese guest.

The story also hinted that on such glittering occasions, certain help in the Arnedo feudal household would almost always be coincidentally fishing along the banks of the same river and would invariably emerge with a basketful of items which did not belong to any specie of aquatic vertebrates.

Be that as it may, I can attest to the fact that the Arnedos had a flair for making you feel the splendor of supreme hospitality.

When you walked into any of their guest rooms, you discovered that everything you could possibly need for a comfortable stay was there: brand-new slippers, pajamas, robes, toothbrush, tooth powder, all kinds of beverages from European cellars, and a stable of servants at your beck and call around the clock.

When, after your second breakfast in the morning, you finally emerged from this dream bedroom to lounge in the veranda nearby with other guests, the alert help would swoop upon your group with just the right size of gaming table covered with thick green felt and an unopened set of playing cards.

In later years I made the rounds of the casinos along the Riviera and much later at Las Vegas and I'd swear not one of them approximated the kind of pleasant surprises that Don Joaquin offered his gambling guests at Sulipan.

And so, at Sulipan, they gambled continually for days and nights, the adults, I mean. The young people had what amounted to a disco pad all their own in one section of the mansion with as many as three orchestras taking turns to furnish continuous music. There was endless gaiety among the young, while vast fortunes changed hands in the game rooms nearby.

These conclaves were timed for the peak of the harvest season and the season's sales from cane sugar and rice and tobacco often were totally staked with each deal of the Arnedo cards. They were great fortunes, too, for it was not unusual for the more enterprising with good church contacts to own boundless fertile lands in Central Luzon and have them tilled at next to nothing in labor cost.

Thus took roots what we knew later as the agrarian unrest, along with the moral decadence that widespread gambling brought forth upon this land.

I have heard it said, and I quite agree, that our colonial rulers had tolerated gambling, first to get the minds of the masses off their misery and, second, the easier to rule the idle rich in their state of degradation.

BUT WHILE BEING a pillar of that decadent society, my Lola Ninay was not lacking in redeeming instincts.

It was the thirty-six thousand silver pesos she lent to the organizers that financed the founding of the Liceo de Manila — the very first Filipino-owned-and-managed private college in the country.

And, in partnership with another well-off matron, Doña Pantaleona Rosales Vda. de Reyes, Lola Ninay mortgaged most of her real estate to raise the ₱100,000 as her share in capitalizing the very first Filipino-owned private bank in the country. The bank opened sometime in 1902, under the name, Abreu, Newberry and Reyes.

The two doñas furnished the cash, while Mr. Newberry, a precursor of the latter-day American carpetbaggers, was

supposed to provide the know-how. But as it turned out, what he knew was not much.

For before long, this technical man had allowed the lending out of more than the then required 60% of current and 30% of savings deposits, and unlike the bank supervisors of more recent times, the then Secretary of Finance, Mr. Ide, somehow discovered the anomaly and ordered the liquidation of the bank within 45 days. The story went that the bank was doing so well the depositors were hauling their silver coins in wheelbarrows and the foreign-owned banks got envious and inspired the action against Lola's bank.

Poor Doña Pantaleona and Doña Ninay. They had to sell blocks and blocks of choice real estate to make good. Doña Pantaleona lost several blocks of lots fronting the Philippine General Hospital on Taft Avenue, while Lola Ninay surrendered the title to quite a few choice Binondo lots to Capitan Luis Yangco, one of the more moneyed men of the time.

As you can see, the future and fortunes of the Buencaminos might have been entirely different if there were then some money market from which Lola Ninay could borrow, even at today's usurious rates, just to comply with the reserve requirements. This is the way today's banks deceive the Central Bank: by borrowing from the money market at usurious rates to meet the CB's window dressing requirements.

DOÑA NINAY HAD another distinction: she was a fairy godmother to the thousands of devotees of the Aglipayan or Philippine Independent Church.

Like most matrons of that day, Lola Ninay was a staunch Catholic. But she had a streak of patriotism in her, too, and it was not difficult for my *revolutionario* father to persuade her that the Aglipayan movement was in fact an expression of our national independent spirit.

Father was a personal friend of the *Obispo Maximo* Gregorio Aglipay, for they worked together with President Aguinaldo in the Malolos government. I never knew whether Father became an actual convert although historians have listed him as one of the founders of the Philippine Independent Church. But there was no doubt he admired the courage of Bishop Aglipay to do a Henry VIII, especially as it was for a much more moral and certainly more nationalistic reason.

In any case, Father convinced grandma Ninay to donate a piece of property on Elcano street in Tondo of about 2000 square meters, on which eventually stood the first Aglipayan cathedral in the country.

And this brings me to my own views about religion.

BUT I THINK I have a redeeming trait, if I may say so myself.

I do believe in God. I believe all religions are good, else so many people throughout the world would not profess them. And I do pray. Even today I say the same prayers in Spanish which I had been taught at home and at the Ateneo about 80 years ago. And I pray with real feeling, alone.

For while reason and logic and the scientific test argue that certain rituals belong to the realm of superstition, I am awed by the fantastic order of nature and the universe. Surely there must be some power, some divine force that gives life and light, that propels the galaxies, that triggers the mind.

I feel that one must have faith, else he won't be human. And so I have my own kind of faith. And I am happy for those who are happy because of their own brand of faith.

THE BOOKS SAY it has taken eons for man to develop faith. Centuries had elapsed before Jesus Christ delivered the Sermon on the Mount — which to me is the greatest religion of all: to do right by your fellow man.

The books further recount that thinkers like Martin Luther began asking questions in the Middle Ages, and the great Protestant movements argued for more inquiry. Thus was modern science and technology accelerated. It had taken almost 2,000 years before good old Pope John saw some goodness even in people of other faiths. To my mind, Pope John XXIII's ecumenism was a great milestone in man's drive toward true Christianity, which is simply love of your fellow human beings, no matter their faiths.

I realize that in our predominantly Catholic country, what I'm saying is heresy. But at 88, I can only wish to be honest with myself and so I'm quite prepared to be called a heretic, confident that tolerance shall prevail in the end.

Sorry, but my guess is that in another century or so, the rituals are likely gradually to lose out. Rituals will have to change with the widening frontiers of knowledge.

But as long as the specie *Homo sapiens* survives, there will always be a wish to believe in an Omnipotent. Only the style shall change. But I believe the great Christian values of fairness and kindness and love for fellow men shall prevail forever.

I can hear many of you saying I'm dead wrong. I grant you I could be all that. But that you allowed me to say my piece in the same spirit of freedom that I respect the right of everyone else to profess his belief is to me already a gratifying progress on the road to free inquiry.

My only message to those carrying the torch after me is: follow the dictates of your conscience. But keep inquiring. For the cosmos is still so full of unknowns that man must still unravel and I dare say one day, perhaps a million light years from now, free inquiry shall reveal one truth which all men can profess in common.

Yes, let us all have faith. But not blind faith. Rather, faith that the reasoning mind can accept as true. Let us have faith, indeed, but let us have truth, too.

(NOTE: I apologize for this sermon. But I hope you'll grant that at 88 one can be forgiven for trying to take on honest position on an issue that has puzzled man through the ages.)

6

HOSTAGES ABROAD

> It gives me the gooseflesh when I recall that we almost perished like death convicts in a gas chamber on our very first night in North America.

I WAS 12 AT THE turn of the century, quite already aware that something world-shaking was happening in the country. The changing times hit me in a really big way.

One day in early October, 1900, my father told Philip and me to get ready because we were going to the United States. Just like that. To the United States! And at that age!

About this time Father was already convinced the Americans were not the worst people on earth and he was among the first to persuade his countrymen that further resistance in the insurrection was pointless.

By this time, Father had made the acquaintance of the members of the Schurman Commission. This Commission, by the way, was composed of prominent educators. The head was Jacob Gould Schurman, president of Cornell University, and his members were Dean C. Worcester, professor of an-

thropology at the University of Michigan, and Bernard Moses, professor of economics at the University of California.

President McKinley must have recognized the importance of the Philippines, judging from the high caliber of the first civilian administrators he sent here. I think it is not a mere coincidence that he should choose such outstanding educators as members of this Commission. As events proved, mass education was the more priceless American legacy to the Philippines.

I must comment on the side that these educators must have had the zeal of college football scouts for they later made it their business to recruit *pensionados* for their schools.

Anyway, in a gesture so perfectly natural since they were educators, the Commissioners proposed that bright Filipino students be sent to the U.S. for advanced studies. Thus was conceived the great *pensionado* program that trained the cream of the Filipino youth for leadership.

AS I LOOKED back and began reading the accounts of the period, I was more and more convinced our traipsing to the U.S. at that adolescent age had a double-edged motivation.

Don't forget that Admiral Dewey had hoodwinked General Aguinaldo into driving the Spaniards away to make the job of American occupation that much easier. In plain lingo, Aguinaldo was done in!

The Americans by then were fast learning the art of colonization. And you really can't blame them for not being too trusting, especially on people like my father who might

just have been feigning loyalty. They had to guard against double-agentry, which was the prevailing name of the game.

So what could be a more sure-fire device for guaranteeing a suspect's loyalty than to hold his children as hostages?

And that, believe it or not, was how I figured I became the very first Filipino student, along with my brother Philip, to embark for the promised land — the very first, that is, under the American regime. As hostage!

Plus the added dividend for the Americans, as I now see, that by seeing the great United States of America in person, we'd be so deeply impressed we'd preach the gospel of democracy when we came home. Isn't this, by the way, the real catch to all those travel grants that many Western governments award to Filipino scholars and journalists even today?

The scheme, if indeed it was one, was really ingenious. We did not travel aboard anything resembling a military ship. We sailed on board a luxurious transport reserved for officers and high civilian functionaries. And, most convincingly, we were each made to pay the standard charge of one good silver dollar for everyday we were on board. Now, wherever did you hear of hostages paying for their passage?

Only there was a little flaw. The later-day *pensionados* were picked from among bright Filipino students. And I knew I was not bright, though Philip was regarded as one. So, by simple deduction, I concluded that I could only have been sent away to guarantee my father's loyalty.

It worked, too. As far as I can determine, my father's belief in what the United States stood for — freedom, democracy, opportunity — never wavered to his dying day.

So, off we were, my brother Philip and I. But since we were just kids, it was arranged to have our grandfather,

Don Flaviano Abreu, chaperon us during the voyage.

I recall vividly that our departure was as gloomy as a wake. I held on to the *tapiz* of Lola Ninay, not wanting to part from her after she had said we might never see her again.

In those days, crossing over to the U.S. took all of 30-odd days and you could die off in the mainland and your folks back home might not hear about it till you had long been buried. That thought, plus the fact we were venturing forth into a strange land at such an unripe age, made parting quite a sad affair.

On top of everything, I knew no word of English, except a few cuss phrases I had picked up from Yankee soldiers. And so I was somewhat frightened.

One afternoon in October, 1900, we set sail on board the U.S. Army Transport *President Grant*. I don't recall much of the trip except that the nights grew colder as the good ship swung north around the great circle. Honolulu was the only stop. Then San Francisco.

THE TRANSPORT *Grant* was a de luxe number by the standards of those days. She was decked to carry officers. Philip and I occupied a two-bunk cabin and Grandfather stayed in another stateroom.

One early morning I complained to the room steward I could not stand the chilly room. Why, I asked, didn't they provide us with blankets? I must have asked this question in sign language. Either that or he could grasp a little of my Ateneo Castilian.

In any case, he went to my bunk, pulled out the heavy bedspread and, voila! a thick army blanket was there before my eyes, snugly sandwiched between two immaculately clean linen sheets.

Wide eyed, I looked at the cabin boy as if to ask, how the hell was I to know I was supposed to tuck myself under what looked to me like a mattress wrap? At home, when it got cold, we closed our windows or used a cotton *kumot* which we unfolded by kicking one end away.

My only other memory of the *Grant* was that when we first sat in a huge dining room, the waiter gave us the menu. Philip and I stared at each other. The menu might as well have been written in Greek. So we just kind of pointed at any item as it came on the list and the patient waiter must have wondered why we loved so many soup dishes all in one meal.

I DON'T REMEMBER what the San Francisco dock looked like when we landed. I do recall I was a bit disillusion to see that the American *terra firma* was not much different from other landscapes I've seen. In my imagination, I had an image of heavenly America as somewhat of a paradise where angels sing in a cluster of clouds with silver lining. I faintly recall it didn't look right to me that white men were pulling ropes and doing stevedore work at the docks. Back home, white men did no such manual labor.

What I do recall, distinctly, was that we were billeted upon arrival at the Palace Hotel. I was to realize later that this hotel was tops. Right on the famous Market street. (In the 20s President Harding died there.)

In those days, the electric light was not yet used. Our suite at the Palace had a gas lamp for lighting. Our first night, before turning in, we did what we had always done with lamps at home: blew off the gas jet with healthy blasts from our lungs.

No sooner had we dozed off (this time, snugly under blankets) than someone knocked at our door, sounding frantic. He rushed for the gas lamp and turned a cock, obviously to stop the escaping gas.

I understood later that the long sermon he gave us, which I hardly understood, had to do with whether we wanted to die like death convicts in a gas chamber. It gave me the gooseflesh everytime I recalled we could have perished from gas poisoning on our very first night in a foreign land.

Those November nights when we arrived in San Francisco were awfully cold. I recall among the first *compras* we made were those two-piece woolen long johns that snugly covered our limbs down to our ankles and up to our necks.

We were so pleased when we first tried them on we actually walked out into the hotel corridor with nothing on but those long johns. We wondered why other hotel guests who saw us seemed shocked or amused. When told later we were not supposed to venture out of hotel rooms without full outer garments, we felt like two cents.

After a few days of shopping for warm clothes and sightseeing in hilly San Francisco, we crossed over by ferryboat to Berkeley to go to school at long last.

7

INTO MANHOOD AT BOONE'S

Once you belong, the gang takes you along to sample San Francisco's swinging doors.

BERKELEY WAS a lovely university town adjacent to Oakland across the bay from San Francisco. The university campus was one huge park, its trees a riot of deep autumn colors that chilly day when Grandfather Flaviano brought us to the office of Dr. Benjamin Ide Wheeler, president of the University of California.

Dr. Wheeler was a handsome, imposing figure, fairly heavily built with a mustache that made him look even more dignified. I did not know it then but I later surmised that we went straight to Berkeley at the instance of Professor Bernard Moses, the professor of economics from the University of California who was a member of the Schurman Commission. Professor Moses must have been given much importance to this initial effort at educating Filipinos the American way for he had entrusted us to the care of the illustrous president of the University of California, no less.

To me, Dr. Wheeler was ten feet tall. And he was very correct, too. He made it a point to find out when Grand-

father Flaviano was sailing back to Manila as he wanted to bid my Lolo goodbye.

I never forgot that incident because young as I was I tried to maneuver it so Dr. Wheeler would not go to San Francisco to say goodbye to my grandfather. But he insisted — to my great chagrin. I did not want to take the President of the University of California to the slummy boarding house where my grandfather was staying in the honky-tonky corner of San Francisco's Chinatown. Grandfather did not return to the Palace Hotel after we all had checked out obviously for economic reasons. I suspect he chose to board in Chinatown because he must have felt perfectly at home there, the smells and the sounds being like the Chinatown end of Sagunto street.

I was a bit stick inside me when we reached my grandfather in Chinatown. But Dr. Wheeler seemed not to have minded at all. All that time, I was wondering what really was on Dr. Wheeler's mind. At 12, I already was quite conscious of what we Orientals called "face."

DR. WHEELER MUST have had a hard time deciding where to enroll us. We could not just enter any school because we spoke no English. So Dr. Wheeler worked it out with Mr. Harry Boone, Sr., who ran a boarding school for boys, to tutor us in the language and teach us the regular courses in high school at the same time.

The school had a high-falutin' name: Boone's University School, its justification for using the label university being that it was located not far from the University of California.

But it should more accurately have been called a reformatory rather than a school. For many of the boys there were dropouts or tough guys expelled from the neighboring high schools for one misconduct or another. I should have felt at home there, having been myself a veteran at being expelled.

But I didn't. After about a week, I felt awfully homesick. I started having crazy notions about running away, just like I ran away from Letran, and this time I'd stow away in a Manila-bound boat. That was just a small boy's fancy, of course.

Pretty soon, there were five of us Filipinos at Boone's. The three Roces brothers — Joaquin, Rafael and Marcos — enrolled in the same school.

Besides being fellow Filipinos, we five had another thing in common: after a couple of weeks, we were losing our appetite. And you couldn't really blame us. After all, we've been used to tasty well-seasoned Filipino and Spanish dishes, but do you know what they were giving us at the Boone's dorm day in and day out? Oatmeal for breakfast, and for luncheon, flat roast beef or grilled meat with mashed or fried potatoes. A couple of weeks on those and you really missed your favorite *kare-kare* with *bagoong*. Why, by that time even the lowly smoked fish with salted egg and tomatoes seemed a fit banquet for a king!

But somehow I learned to smother my beef with a generous shower of salt and pepper and pretty soon I learned to get by with these flat dishes.

Another odd thing: the local guys took their showers only once a week, mostly on Saturday evenings. It took me some time to realize that during chilly winter days you really

didn't feel like running under the showers at all. Just the same, I kept up my old habit back home of bathing everyday.

IT WASN'T EASY to get adjusted to the new environment. Back home, we had been sheltered all our lives and were somewhat spoiled. But at Boone's you were just one of the kids and you could be the Prince of Wales for all they cared.

And like most mobs of that age in any school, there were gangs in the group, led almost always by some bullies. The first thing you knew, they were inventing derisive catcalls to try and get your goat.

The bullies called us "chinks, chinks," "monkeys," or "Philippinuts" or "Philimaprunes." Anyone who called me these were in for a fight — that was how insulted I felt when I heard their taunts.

One day, a chap named Friedman insulted me. He was a few inches taller and much heavier. But I didn't care. I challenged him to a fight.

When the other kids heard that my challenge had been accepted, there was a commotion in the dorm. We agreed to meet in the basement under the dining room after lunch. The whole gang was there, cheering as in a bullfight. We sparred for a moment, but at that time I hadn't yet had any lesson in boxing. All I knew was the kind of free-for-all in Intramuros where you plunged into a pile of scuffling boys, flailed wildly with your fists and ran for cover in the dungeons beneath the walls.

I saw Friedman getting set to charge smack into me. But instead of side-stepping, I met him, head on. I didn't know what hit me. Philip said I was out cold for an hour or so and I was already in my bedroom, all my joints aching, when I came to.

YOU DID NOT HAVE to win a scrap at Boone's to belong. It was enough that you fought like a man. After a few such scuffles, usually with fellows much bigger than myself, the guys started liking me. I knew, because after a while, they took me along in their week-end forays across the bay into San Francisco.

Did we paint the town red? Our first stop usually was a favorite beer hall not far from the ferry landing somewhere off Market street. We were not allowed to take hard liquor, but beer was okay. And we had a trick. Just buy yourself a mug of beer and nurse it as long as you can. All that time, you help yourself to a buffet of cold cuts and canapes, *gratis et amore*.

I was a bit apprehensive and embarrassed at first, but I watched the stocky bartender, mustache, vest and all, and he seemed to beam with understanding, knowing we were just poor students trying to have fun. Thus did we mooch a free lunch for the day.

One day, the gang was in a real naughty mood. Our leader — I don't recall his name, but he was the toughest of the lot — took us to Dupont street where we sampled the famous swinging doors. I was a bit scared. For there I was, not quite 13, and already out on a lark like seasoned gob!

Well, there were those swinging doors, right off the sidewalks. You pushed one, took a gander at a scantily dressed but heavily painted dame waving you to come in, and if the number looked good to you, you locked the swinging door behind you, grabbed the girl with a half nelson and the two of you disappeared into a fairly dark inner room which reeked of cheap perfume.

My first experience at Dupont was a bit of mental torture. My very first, mind you. And it was not much fun because all that time I was asking myself if this was what I sailed halfway around the world for. And wouldn't the folks be totally disillusioned if they knew!

I don't recall how much was the union rate, but it must have been considerable because one of the reasons I shunned the swinging door on Dupont street after that first adventure was purely economic. I was so allowance-conscious I always hid a quarter coin in my vest pocket before stepping ashore at San Francisco to make sure I'd have a fare for my ferry ride back to the dorm. For once ashore, we fellows had an open purse for fun.

BUT THERE WERE DAYS when the gang did themselves proud. These were the more frequent visits to the Tivoli, San Francisco's famed opera house. There I first heard Caruso and Tetrazzini in *Lucia de Lammermoor*. I thought they were just grand. The arias would haunt me and I'd be whistling the signature tunes aboard the ferry on our way home.

No less popular to the gang was the Orpheum theatre where the fare was some kind of variety numbers — songs,

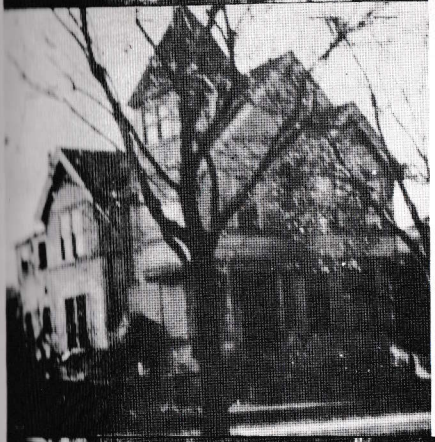
dances, jokes. The comedians spoke so fast. And our vocabulary was so pitifully limited. So we just stared there, totally unresponsive, wondering why the crowd was roaring after the punch lines.

But not for long. In a few months, we could so catch on even the subtle gags that we often burst out laughing, just Philip and the Roces boys and I, a split second before the audience could react.

I MUST SAY AT THIS juncture that Boone's wasn't a bad school after all. For in barely six months, we were already adept at the language, slang, idiom and all. Philip and one of the Roces boys actually made the honors list after the first semester. As you might expect, I wasn't anywhere near the top of the class academically. But I must have had fairly passing grades for at the end of our fourth year, I was given a high school certificate.

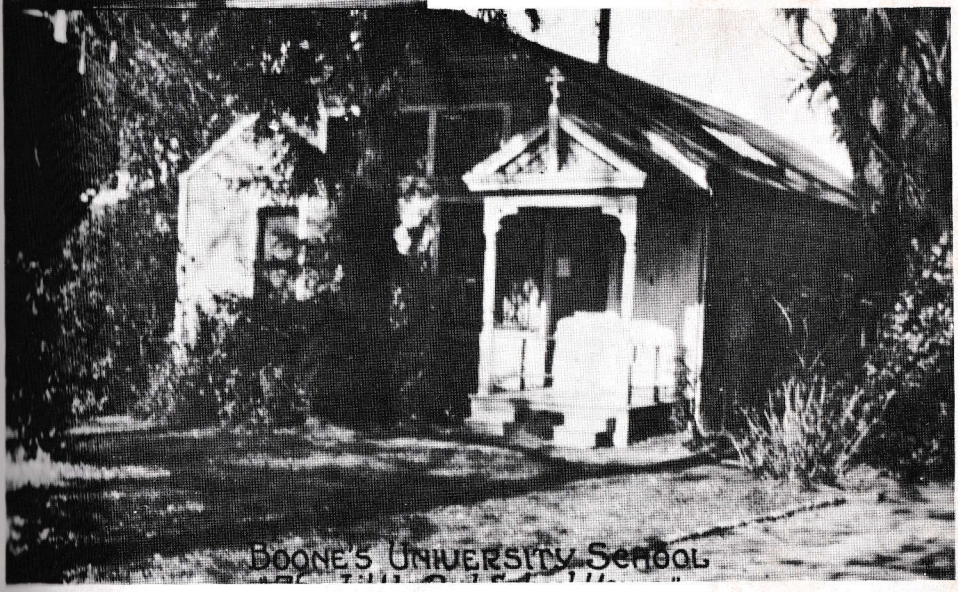
Anyway, I think I made good use of my stay at Boone's. There I first learned to play tennis — a game I still play today. I learned to play handball and baseball and American football. I liked football because those scrimmages toughened me for my later scraps with the likes of Friedman. And I wanted to be athletic if only to avenge an embarrassment as when Harry Boone, son of the schoolmaster, beat me handily at a race where I sprinted the regulation way while he ran — backwards.

LET ME NOW GO back a little in time to recall our first Christmas in the United States. All the American fellows



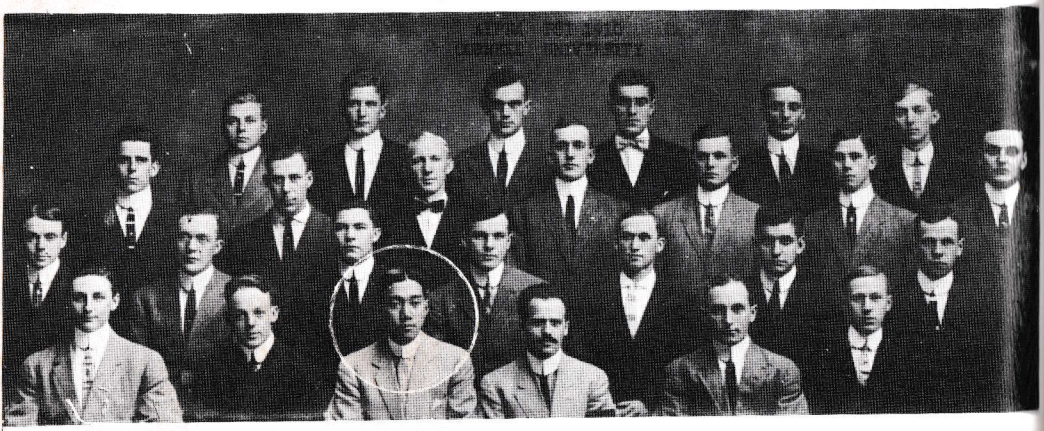
This is how a well-dressed 14-year old looked in 1902 at Boone's University School.

Boone's University School taught me English, made me tough like the rest of the kids. I roomed on the third floor of Mr. Boone's home, top; boarded in the Mess Hall, center, in which basement I fought my first scrap; and attended classes in the schoolhouse that looked like a chapel, below. This School was my world from 1900 to 1905.



Spring Day was the biggest event for fun and frolic at Cornell. This is the cast of the comedy skit shown by the Cosmopolitan Club in 1910. Since there was no female from the Philippines at Cornell at that time, the role of *cariñosa* dancer was played by Tom Mapua, seated in front, who wore a wig and a Maria Clara dress. I was the pianist, fifth from right, standing. The show was a hit.

These were my brothers in the Alpha Psi frat house at Cornell, all from the College of Veterinary Medicine. I was the only Asian member of this fraternity.



had gone home for the recess and there we were, five lonely young Filipinos, wishing we were back home where folks ushered the season in with *simbang gabi* and *puto bombong* and lanterns and *noche buena* and where your aunts and uncles gave you fruits and nuts and candies on Christmas Day.

We faced the loneliest December of our lives.

But not for long. For our guardian, President Wheeler, was a real angel. He arranged it so we would be house guests of one of his close friends. We were taken on a train ride south through forests of giant redwoods along the scenic Pacific Ocean shores of California. At a small station in a vast wooded estate, we were picked up by a dogcart harnessed to a beautiful horse. We climbed endlessly up a road that kept circling an enormous hill and at the very summit there stood before our dazzled eyes what I thought was a medieval castle. It was named "Hacienda del Pozo de Verona." The Hispanic name was a welcome homey touch.

We pulled up by the stables. Gosh! I thought it was fit to be a parlor for humans, it was so neat and clean. We entered the cavernous mansion and, for the first time, I saw a sample of affluence that, to me, made Malacañang and the Archbishop's palace back home look like nipa huts.

We were told the owner of the mansion, one of the more renowned benefactors of the University of California, was vacationing at the moment back east. Her name was Mrs. Phoebe Hearst. Her son, William Randolph, became a publishing tycoon. I learned later that the place was better known as Hearst's fortress at San Simon.

And to make us feel at home, several grown-up daughters of Acting Governor Ide of the Philippines were also

invited as house guests and they played hostesses for us. We were so gay our homesickness vanished.

I thought if this was the way they treated hostages, I was prepared to be a prisoner of war anytime.

THERE WAS ONE OTHER occasion that made me think President Wheeler cared a lot about us little Filipino boys. He sent us word to appear at his official residence at the UC campus one afternoon. And we must come in our best Sunday suits, he said.

There was a big crowd all over the place when we got to his house. We were ushered in and sure enough Dr. Wheeler was there to greet us. As he shook our hands, he passed each of us on to another gentleman about his own size with a receding forehead.

"Victor," President Wheeler said as he bent a little to reach my hand, "I'd like you to meet Mr. McKinley, the President of the United States!"

I don't recall if I was able to say how do you do Mr. President. I was too excited.

It was a reception President Wheeler gave for President McKinley who had stopped over at Berkeley in the course of a barnstorming tour during his re-election campaign.

At Boone's dorm that evening, the gang kept pumping my hand. They wanted to shake the hand that shook the hand of the President of the United States.

8

FELIPE BUENCAMINO THE FIRST

My father had a star billing in the epic drama of his generation.

ONE OF THE GREATEST regrets of my life was that I did not have a chance to pal around more with my father. Had I realized early enough that he had cut quite a controversial figure during the revolution and on through the early years of the American regime, I could have jotted down for posterity a lot more about him as a human being, and about his thinking on the controversies in which he was involved. That way I could have helped so he could have taken his rightful place in history.

It was long after he had died at 80 in 1929 that I realized it was too late to do a first person story on him. What a pity. From all accounts, pro and con, Father played a fairly prominent role in the historic drama of the revolutionary period.

All the time he was getting in deep in the revolution, I was barely ten and blissfully unaware of the turmoil in which he was involved. I saw very little of him, for since

the death of my mother when I was a babe in arms, Father left us entirely under the wing of Lola Ninay and it was one of Lola Ninay's daughters, Tita Adelaida Abreu, wife of a Swiss gentleman, Mr. Arnold Hollman, who actually mothered us.

When I first returned in 1906, I saw even less of Father as I was too engrossed in my search for my first job. I again stayed at Lola's house on Sagunto street (now Sto. Cristo) while Father hibernated, all by himself, in a little house on Padre Rada street in Tondo and, later, in a small bungalow on Azcarraga street. When I returned for good in 1911, already a doctor of veterinary medicine, I was ordered to rush to the field almost upon my arrival, for the rinderpest situation had taken a turn for the worst. So I did not have much chance to fraternize with Father.

My story on him will therefore be mostly a retelling of what I had heard from the elder members of the family, plus a few incidents about him that I myself witnessed first hand.

I heard as a boy that he was deeply involved in the revolution and I was in constant fear of our losing him any moment. I recall seeing him on a few occasions conferring furtively in our house with persons who, I was told, were officers of the revolution under General Emilio Aguinaldo. The names I heard often among those officers were General Tomas Mascardo and General Emilio Riego de Dios.

We saw much less of Father during the fighting against the United States. When he finally returned to Manila sometime in 1899, he was a prisoner of war. I remember his return because my half sister, Soledad, took us along, Philip and me, almost daily to visit Dad in a room at the Ayuntamiento where the Americans had detained him for six months.

Before his capture, Father had fled to the north with General Aguinaldo when the Americans took the offensive. He had to stay behind somewhere in Pampanga when Aguinaldo went on into hiding at Palanan because the general's mother could not stand the rigors of the flight and she was left in my father's care until the surrender.

I KNEW FATHER HAD later gotten along well with the Americans because he frequently entertained a number of them (I was later told they were members of the Schurman Commission) at Lola's house on Sagunto street. Apparently, it was in one of those parties that one of the commissioners broached the idea to my father about our going to the U.S. to study.

We were already studying at Boone's school when Father one day showed up, unannounced, in Berkeley. We were so happy to see him!

He said he had been sent on a one-man mission to Washington by the Federalista party to ask the American officialdom for the adoption of a policy on the Philippines along this line:

1. Set a definite date for the grant of independence;
2. If that was not immediately attainable, then to grant statehood;
3. And failing in that, then the final alternative of annexing the Philippines as part of American territory.

On his return stopover at Berkeley, Father was a dejected man. His mission was a total flop. He said he was told by then Secretary of War Elihu Root it was too premature to decide on the future status of the Philippines.

I recall distinctly what, he said, was Secretary Root's comment on why annexation was unthinkable: The United States was beginning to face a black problem, Root had told him, and it would be foolhardy to add a brown problem on top of it.

Looking back, one must now credit Elihu Root with omniscience, for it appears that as early as 1903, he already was worrying about the same race problem that was to hit America like a bombshell in the 60s and is still nagging that country to this day.

I'll never forget a little incident about Father when he visited us en route to Washington. Father belonged to a clan of musicians — remember the famous composer Francisco Buencamino? — and he himself played the flute. Sometime in the 80s, an Italian opera company played in Manila and Father brought certain members of the orchestra to the house on a Sunday for relaxation. I was told they had fun, with Father playing his flute and Mother the piano while the Italians joined in with their instruments. So Father had always fancied himself as a music *aficionado*.

Well, Father decided he must sample the likes of American music, so one evening he took us to the Tivoli in San Francisco to watch an opera. We were seated in the second row of the orchestra. One of the features was the well-known sextette song in *Lucia de Lammermoor*. Apparently, my father knew the piece. He was so carried away by the excellence of the sextette's performance that, as per the custom in Manila in showing enthusiastic appreciation, Father sprung on his feet and shouted: "Viva Director! Orchestra! Director! Orchestra!"

His one-man ovation thundered throughout the otherwise silent hall. I sank in my seat, wanting to cry. The

people stared at us. I was ill with fever in my Berkeley dorm the next three days running.

Then one day he took us to lunch at the Palace Hotel. The Palm Garden of this hotel was the main dining room where San Francisco's elite gathered, mostly to be seen.

Dessert was strawberry with whipped cream, served in a saucer. Father called the waiter and said, "I want my strawberry in a soup plate." People in nearby tables craned their necks, staring at Father. The waiter, half amused, didn't budge. So Father beckoned him once more and stuck a silver dollar in his hands. Father got his soup plate all right, but Philip and I felt warm around our necks. We lost our appetite for dessert.

Letters from home told afterwards of how Father felt he was discredited for coming home from Washington so empty-handed. I learned later his Federalista group had fallen into public disfavor and from then on he had shunned public life.

How he detested politics and government career! He must have been so disillusioned. One day during a chance conversation among us in the family, Philip, being a lawyer, happened to mention about possibly going into politics. Father got emotional. "Para muestra basta un boton," he exclaimed. (Literally, for sample, one button is enough.) He was warning us in effect that with his sad experience in politics, we should be persuaded not to plunge into it.

AND YET, FROM ALL accounts, Father should have no regrets. I'd be mighty proud and consider myself fortunate if I had had a chance to play, as he did, such a billing

among stars in the epic drama of his generation.

A lawyer from Sto. Tomas, he was counted among the so-called *ilustrados* of the period who, by reason of their education, were engulfed in the upheaval that demanded the active participation of the intellectuals of the day.

Historians note that he was among the elite whom the last Spanish governor general enticed into joining a so-called Consultative Assembly that would run an autonomous regime but still under the Spanish crown. It was a desperate ploy to try to save a sinking ship. Anyway, it is recorded that Father was chosen by Captain General Augustin as emissary to General Aguinaldo with an offer of autonomy plus top military rank for Aguinaldo at some fancy salary.

Not only was the offer rejected; Aguinaldo detained the emissary and later persuaded him to serve as one of the braintrusters of the revolution. So, when Aguinaldo formed his first cabinet following the declaration of independence in 1898, Father was named director of public works.

It is also recorded that Father was among the key figures at the Malolos Congress; that, in fact, he was credited with having composed the flambouyant prose that Aguinaldo read as the first inaugural address of a Philippine president.

In the turbulent episode which saw Apolinario Mabini relieved as premier by Pedro A. Paterno, my father was given the portfolio of the secretary of foreign affairs.

Then came the celebrated "slapping incident" at Cabanatuan where the Aguinaldo government had fled in the face of an intensified American military pressure.

General Antonio Luna, one of the top military men of the period who was renowned for his temper, was said to

have come to Cabanatuan to confront General Aguinaldo about some issue involving command authority.

The accounts record that Luna and Father had a heated exchange of words and that Luna slapped my father who was defending Aguinaldo.

I never had a chance to get my father's version of this incident as I did not take interest in it until after Father's death. But one day in 1961, during a call on the aging General Aguinaldo, I asked him to tell me all that he knew about this incident. Also present during my talk with the General were his secretary, Mr. Emilio Virata; my son Victor, Jr.; a young Frenchman in the consular service, Mr. Allain Mialhe; and a lawyer, Mr. Alfonso Felix, who was president of the Historical Conservation Society.

General Aguinaldo's version was that there was a rather heated exchange of words between General Luna and my father. It seems that General Luna had accused my half brother, Joaquin Buencamino, of cowardice and my father retorted it was Luna who was guilty of cowardice for he had abandoned a certain defensive fort in the heat of battle.

Anyway, Aguinaldo added, Luna stood up to hit my father, but at this instant Aguinaldo interceded, reminding Luna he was in the presence of the President of the Philippines, and the incident ended there.

It is also recorded that Father was among the early converts in the American pacification drive and in fact took an active part in it. Then along with Don Pedro A. Paterno and several other prominent Filipinos, Father organized the Asociacion de Paz which was later named the Partido Federal. It was as spokesman of this party that he went to the United States in 1903.

BUT THOUGH HE NEVER himself aspired for any position afterwards, Father continued to espouse nationalist causes. He was a close personal friend of Bishop Gregorio Aglipay and he considered the Aglipay movement as part and parcel of the revolution against Spain. It was he who persuaded Lola Ninay, his mother-in-law, to donate a piece of land on Elcano street on which the first Aglipay church was built.

I was told that Father was among those who strongly believed that Catholic Church properties which had been seized by the Filipino rebels should remain in Filipino hands since Spanish sovereignty had ended.

And this brought about his controversy with then Governor General William Howard Taft. Father had volunteered to defend the tenants of a certain church property in Taytay, Rizal province, who were being evicted. I was told that Father opposed the late Don Juan Sumulong in this court case.

Father was said to have lost this case after Governor Taft took the side of the Church in what Father considered a double-cross. It seems that Father had been assured earlier by Taft that he would favor the Filipino side in this controversy. But, so the story goes, Taft was pressured into changing his mind by Catholic elements in the United States. Taft by this time already had the presidency of the United States in mind and he had calculated that the support of U.S. Catholics would enhance his political ambitions.

Father was no less unlucky in his defense of General Macario Sakay, one of the revolutionists who had been charged with brigandage and other crimes. Father argued to no avail that Sakay's alleged excesses were unavoidable

consequences of a state of war. Sakay was convicted and hanged.

In later years, Father devoted his time to teaching law in his own private school which he called Rizal University. He had only a few students, but a number of them became famous, including Ramon Diokno who became a senator (and whose son, Jose, later became senator, too), as well as Justices Ocampo and Pablo; the industrialist, Guillermo Guevarra, and my brother Philip.

Father spent his years of retirement playing kingmaker for some of his younger friends who entered politics, including Dr. Dominador Gomez and General Justo Lukban who later became mayor of Manila. Father was so highly regarded as a political strategist by his cronies that they called him *Oraculo de Tondo.*

IN ONE OF MY VISITS with my father since my return from Cornell, he taught me a lesson I have never forgotten. When I got to his bungalow on Azcarraga street, I found him engaged in a lively conversation with a tall, dark man with scars across his face. I was shocked. I could not understand why my father was hobnobbing with a man who looked to me like a bum or an outlaw.

When the tall, dark man left, I told my father I did not think he should be fraternizing with such suspicious characters.

Whereupon my father gave me a talking to like he never did before.

"Do you know who that man is?" If it were not for him, you won't be here today!" my father exclaimed.

I was startled. I could not understand how such a wretched-looking person could be so revered by my father.

Then he told me the story. The dark man was an old associate of his in the revolution: Guillermo Masankay, one of the original patriots who took up arms against Spain in the battle of Pinaglabanan in San Juan, Rizal.

From then on, I have been careful not to belittle anyone on the basis of his appearance. And I have never forgotten how my father admonished me to be a little more patriotic by giving due reverence to the heroes who fought to forge our people into a strong nation.

I got to thinking that my irreverent conduct at that time was perhaps typical of the superior attitude acquired by those of us who stayed abroad for so long. But I think that on the whole we more than made up for this arrogance eventually by developing a fierce brand of nationalism especially in the struggle to do away with discrimination against Filipinos in our own homeland.

IN HIS RETIREMENT, Father was a poor man, mostly because he had been some kind of a spendthrift most of his life. If he had some cash in his pockets, he'd blow all of it treating his cronies or playing *burro*. If any of his cronies as much as hinted a need for cash, he would split with what little he had in his pockets.

My father was barely 40 when my mother died and, being one of the very few native lawyers extant, he was still a very marketable widower. The story current within the family was that Father had an eye on a stage personality whose fine acting was matched by her eyeful looks. There

already were serious talks of matrimony. But it seems that in one of her performances, she committed the then heinous crime of lifting her skirt to a point a few millimiters above her knees. That was a first-rate scandal. She had lost her whole reputation. The disgrace was so unbearable my father had to give up paying court to the reckless actress else he would have been ostracized by the community.

I got to thinking: some eighty years sure had made a great difference in the mores of the people. For in recent years, a girl was not smart if she did not wear a mini skirt, the more mini, the more groovy. I wonder how Father's crowd would have felt if they had encountered today's mod girl who goes to dress affairs virtually topless!

WHEN LOLO FLAVIANO died in the early 20s his estate should, by operation of law, be equally divided between Tita Adelaida Hollman and the heirs of her only sister, my late mother.

But Father called Philip and me one day to give us a piece of advice.

"Your Tita Adelaida has mothered you all these years," Father told us, "and you owe her a lifetime of gratitude. After all you two now have your own career and nobody can take that away from you. You can now make a living for yourselves, while your Tita must depend almost solely on the inheritance.

"So my advice to you is: let her keep whatever she wants to keep of the inheritance and be content with whatever is left after she has picked what she wants."

We followed his advice. We told Tita Adelaida she may keep all of the 500-hectare rice hacienda at Calumpit since she had attended to it herself most of the time anyway. Philip and I were happy to receive a few pieces of real estate, most of them unproductive at the time, scattered around the northern side of Manila.

By the way, Father had five children by his first marriage: Maria who married Colonel Pick, a doctor in the U.S. Army; Soledad who married Congressman Jose Zurbito of Masbate; Joaquin who was killed in action as a major in the revolutionary army under General Tinio; Victoria who married Lieut. Edwin Andrews of the U.S. 5th Cavalry and whose son, Col. Edwin Andrews, Jr. was killed, along with Secretary Rafael Alunan in a plane crash in Mindanao after the war; and Asuncion who married Atty. Marcelino Lontok.

When my father remarried, these children stayed for the most part in the Sulipan estate of their mother.

IT IS A FILPINO custom for adult children to take good care of their aging parents, especially if these parents are past earning age. So in his last remaining years, Philip and I maintained Father at a bungalow on Azcarraga street which we had inherited from Lola Ninay. Father died in quiet retirement in 1929, aged 80. I think he was quite contented that he had left a mark on the history of his country and quite satisfied that his vision of a more enlightened generation after him was a happily-achieved reality.

The town of his birth, San Miguel de Mayumo, province of Bulacan, honored my father on 24 February 1974 on the occasion of the 211th year of the founding of that

town. Main feature of the celebration was the unveiling of both a statue of my father and a marker nearby that had been prepared by the National Historical Institute.

The marker, in Pilipino, says as translated:

FELIPE BUENCAMINO, SENIOR
1848 – 1929

BORN IN THIS TOWN ON 22 SEPTEMBER 1848 TO THE COUPLE VICTOR BUENCAMINO AND PETRONA SIOJO. LAWYER, STATESMAN, LEADER OF THE REVOLUTION. SECRETARY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE FIRST REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES. ONE OF THE FOUNDERS OF PHILIPPINE INDEPENDENT CHURCH.

DIED ON 6 FEBRUARY, 1929.

9

A FAIR EXHIBIT AT THE ST. LOUIS EXPOSITION

Did the imperialists plot to make Americans believe that Filipinos were barbarians?

WE WERE AT BOONE'S in 1903 when the biggest international exposition of that period was held at St. Louis, Missouri, in observance of the centenary of the Louisiana Purchase.

One day, President Wheeler called us in to tell us Santa Claus had come to town. A money order had been received from our folks containing all of one thousand American dollars with instructions for us to spend the summer at the St. Louis Exposition.

Looking back now, I see where the American authorities had gone out of the way to sell their country to the still guerrilla-fighting Filipinos. And, as others suspected, these American policy makers wanted to persuade their fellow Americans that they should stay longer in the Philippines in spite of the clamor of William Jennings Bryan and his Anti-Imperialist League against the American occupation of the Philippines.

There was a big to-do in Manila about the exposition. There was going to be a big Philippine exhibit. A full-scale mission of leading Filipinos was to manage the Philippine booth.

The mission was headed by Dr. Leon Ma. Guerrero (grandfather of Ambassador Leon Ma. Guerrero and writer Carmen Guerrero Nakpil). Among the members of the mission were Mr. Antonio Escamilla, former secretary-interpreter of General Aguinaldo, who also served as secretary to Dr. Guerrero, Mr. Carlos Pardo de Tavera and a Mr. Cuadra (I don't seem to recall his first name) who brought along for exhibition a collection of precious sea shells, shellcraft and other native handicraft.

The famed Philippine Constabulary band under the Negro maestro, Major Loving, was on hand. And so was a group of Igorot folks who presented some quaint tribal dances.

I recall that this Igorot participation later created quite a bit of heated controversy back home. It was charged that certain American imperialists plotted to have the Igorots brought over to give visitors to St. Louis the wrong impression that Filipinos were barbarians who should forever be kept under American rule.

I was of course too young at that time to comprehend the real motives, but my recollection was that among us Filipinos, at least, there was no feeling of embarrassment. In the first place, it seemed inconceivable that Dr. Guerrero would agree to head a big delegation to St. Louis if he had any inkling of the alleged scheme to discredit the Filipinos. In the second place, we thought the visitors would take it in the same way the American Indians were usually presented in other expositions — as cultural curiousities — and that

visitors would know better than to presume the Indians were typical Americans in the same way the Igorots could not conceivably have been mistaken as typical Filipinos.

Then, there were quite a number of cultured and educated Filipinos at the booth, giving information about the Philippines and who could only have been taken for the real Filipinos.

Come to think of it, why should we have been ashamed of our Igorots? Even today, we recognize their carefree lifestyle as superior to our so-called westernized civilization.

Which reminds me of a yarn I heard one day. Some mountain folk up the hills of La Union were watching a bunch of foreign females (Australian models, maybe?) taking a dip off the Nalinac beach. The bikinis of the visitors were scanty, almost topless. Whereupon, one mountain maiden remarked: "Give them a couple more generations and they'll yet dress as civilized as we."

By the way, the story I heard — I was not there when this reportedly happened — was that the PC band made a big hit at the exposition. It seems that while their concert was on one night, someone pulled a Meralco on the band; that is, there was a sudden blackout. The story went that despite the total darkness, the PC band finished the score without a flaw to the delight of the audience who gave them a standing ovation. This was considered a rare feat because most musicians of other nationalities would falter once they could not read the notes.

YOU WILL, I HOPE, pardon me for recalling a strictly personal episode that made the St. Louis Exposition more

memorable to me than anything I had seen at the Fair. True, the progress of American technology, its culture and history were all depicted at the exposition. These were surely worth journeying far to see. But to me, the most outstanding American exhibit during the exposition was a fair maiden named Cordelia.

Cordelia was 18, with light auburn hair, slightly taller than I and a figure that, to me, could as well have made her a fitting stand-in for Venus de Milo. She was the daughter of a Mrs. Byllington who ran some kind of a pension in St. Louis. At that pension, most of the members of the Guerrero mission were billeted. And so were Philip and I.

Well, to make a long story short, both Escamilla, Dr. Guerrero's secretary, and Cuadra, the wealthy exhibitor, fell madly in love with Cordelia. And this is worth recounting because it reveals the varying techniques of Filipinos in proferring their affections.

Escamilla was not well-to-do, but he had one asset: he played the piano well. And every evening, after a hard day at the Fair, Escamilla would mesmerize Cordelia with soothing tunes from the keyboard.

Cuadra was more down to earth, as most Filipino businessmen were. Day in and day out, he'd come home with a box of the most delicious chocolates. He had brought her so many boxes that one day Cordelia made an archway of the empty boxes, about six feet tall!

Later, Cuadra switched to flowers. He would gather fresh roses, make them into bouquets and tell Cordelia she'd be that much sweeter if she decked the roses around her head in her pillow when she slept.

Escamilla was not to be outdone. Come with me to Manila, he'd whisper to Cordelia. Via Paris. And Italy. We'd buy carpets in Egypt for our honeymoon room in Pasay where we'd behold in Manila Bay the most beautiful sunset in the universe!

It amused me to observe that while this titanic battle for the love of Cordelia was raging between Escamilla and Cuadra, both Dr. Guerrero and Mrs. Byllington seemed completely oblivious of what was going on. They seemed to be engaging in a little game of their own, for I'd seen them exchanging little notes. Later, I learned why they had to communicate by video: both were a little hard of hearing.

Anyway, all this was but a prelude to my little story. You see, I did not have to work at the Fair, unlike Escamilla and Cuadra, so, when I finally got bored visiting the Fair, I often just stayed at the Byllington's. Somehow, it was fun, just being near Cordelia.

Before long, I began to see some queer sparkle in her eyes. One day, she surprised me: would I be so kind as to help her shampoo her lovely auburn hair?

Then, one quiet summer morning — after shampooing her lovely auburn hair — it was as if I heard a soft Beethoven serenade as no Escamilla could ever match on the piano; it was as though I tasted a chocolate bonbon far more out of this world than anything Cuadra could bring in from the gift shop; I felt the gaiety of Paris, the grandeur of Rome; I stood on a foot-thick Egyptian carpet and, in my mind's eye, I saw across Manila Bay the most glorious sunset in all creation.

At long last, the summer had waned and we had to return to old Boone's. The guys excitedly asked me if I

enjoyed the three-day train across two-thirds of the continent, and what marvelous things I saw at the Fair. They were engrossed with my tales, some true, some fancied. But the story of sweet Cordelia Byllington I kept only to myself.

10

THE FIRST STREAKER

And how the great earthquake ended my ambition to become a banker.

IT'S FASCINATING how an incident or an event can change the entire direction of your career. I have often thought if I did not call Brother Añon (later Father Añon) *ladron* at the Ateneo, I might have stayed on and become a Thespian playing Lady Macbeth, as many notable Ateneans did in later years. Or if Dewey had not double-crossed Aguinaldo, I might never have been sent away to the U.S. as a combination student-hostage and might just have languished back home, collecting rentals off Lola Ninay's tenants.

In any case, it was Grandma Ninay's dream that I should one day become a banker. How would that sound: Victor Buencamino, president of the pioneer Filipino bank under the corporate name of Abreu, Newberry and Reyes!

And so, even before my last semester at Boone's, it had already been pre-planned that I should register the next fall at the University of California and take up banking in the college of commerce.

Which I did. And I promptly picked a course under Professor Stephen Morse, a famous authority in economics.

BUT, BELIEVE IT OR NOT, my budding career as a banker was abruptly demolished by the great earthquake that virtually destroyed the entire City of San Francisco that early spring morning of April 18, 1906.

I'll never forget that morning. The previous night, the early spring breezes were balmy. We had opened our windows in the dorm and, after my usual showers, I plunged into bed naked, a practice I noted to be widely glorified by both sexes in the movies of the late sixties.

Well, anyway, at early dawn I was jolted out of bed by a sudden tremor. I had experienced earthquakes back home before, but this one was simply terrific. I heard the walls crackling. The chimney began to tople, some bricks falling down the fireplace. The ceiling lamp was swaying like a flying trapeze.

In the confusion, my instinct was for survival. So I scampered down the hallway, plunged out the door and raced across the lawn in what I must now claim was the first streaking case in American campus history. I heard gasps from coeds who had fled from their dorm across the yard and, thoroughly embarrassed, I sprinted right back into our dorm even as the after-shocks were still shimmying the terrain. How I wished I had even a G-string to shield my honor at that instant!

The tremors were bad enough, but the fires which followed did more damage to the great port city across the bay. Fires were still raging in many sections of the city later in

the day when I landed from the ferry, one of some 900 ROTC cadets from the University of California who had been conscripted for emergency duty to help bring order in the stricken city. All of a sudden we were not playing soldier anymore. We were to reinforce the California National Guard from Mare Island in the bay as its full force had been found insufficient to police the ruined city, so widespread was the destruction.

Due to the threat of disorder, martial law, a real one, had been declared by General Funston (the captor of Aguinaldo). Curfew was 5:30 p.m. and we were ordered to stop any civilian found in the streets after curfew. The precise order was to shoot on sight any person found in the act of looting.

Though I had been a bit toughened at Boone's, I was merely 18 with a sheltered past and I found the ragged guard duty a bit strenuous. I was given an 11-pound Springfield which weighed like a ton on my shoulder. We had to hike all the way from the ferry landing to our assigned station somewhere on Golden Gate avenue, a good 15 miles away. By nightful, I felt I was half dead.

But just the same we were assigned guard duty that night. My job was to patrol a two-block length of a street and we were to report by hollering hourly our post number during the company commander's periodic inspection tours.

I knew I could no longer stay awake all the time so I made a deal with the cadet adjacent to my post: he was to holler good and loud when he reported so I'd wake up in time to do my own reporting.

But of all the tough luck: my neighbor happened to be at the far end of his block beyond my hearing when he

hollered and there I was, caught flat-footed leaning against a lamp post, sound asleep.

"Do you know the punishment for a sentry sleeping on duty?" the officer asked me brusquely after he jolted me out of my dreamland. "Death!" This before I, horror-stricken, could reply.

I decided there and then that whatever I did for myself, I'd never become a soldier. And this resolve became doubly stronger when I was caught committing a second offense under the Articles of War: we had been found high and rowdy after our squad had discovered a fully stocked rathskeller in a millionaire's abandoned house where we were billeted. I just couldn't imagine life without drinks, hence my double resolve — never to become a soldier.

But that was not all. Back in Berkeley after a week of sentry work in San Francisco, we were assigned guard duty around the university campus which had been converted into a vast refugee camp. There were several pretty nurses doing first-aid work among the refugees. When a couple of them passed by my post, my chivalrous instinct told me I should escort these nurses back to their dorm, hoping I could wangle out a date or two in the process.

I must have been truly jinxed as a soldier boy, for again I was caught abandoning my post. My plea that I was rendering a truly chivalrous deed as a protector of the defenseless nurses was of no avail.

IT WAS THUS NO SURPRISE, even to myself, that when I came back to Berkeley some two years later to ask for a transcript of my credits as I was transferring to Cornell,

my report card was blemished by a lone big "5' in Military Science and Tactics.

I started to recount how the earthquake so abruptly cut short Lola Ninay's fond dream of having a grandson for president of her pioneer bank.

Well, the entire bay area was still in shambles well past the end of the term in June and all schools and colleges there remained inoperable, their campuses having been converted into refugee camps.

So in the interim we were told to return home. Which suited me fine, for although by now I was perfectly at home in California, thriving well on roast beef and mashed potatoes, I really wanted to sail back home for I had missed the folks badly through all the six years we'd been away.

As you'll soon see, that great earthquake ended forevermore Lola's grand design to make a banker out of me.

11

HOW I GOT STUCK WITH HOGS

And why you must pull the horses' tail when crossing a mountain stream.

THERE REALLY ARE not too many American customs I admired, but this one I admired much: when you turn 18 you're supposed to start making a living. It makes no difference if you come from a well-to-do family; you must try to get a job when you reach that age, otherwise you'll be regarded as a bum.

I have met a number of chums at school of well-to-do parents who joined labor camps, picked fruits and vegetables or dug canals during the summer months so they'd have some pocket money to augment their allowance come the fall when classes start.

And so there I was, in the spring of 1906, just turned 18, healthy, ambitious, a college freshman and fairly fluent in English and forced by the great earthquake to suspend schooling. After six years, I was anxious to see what the old country looked like. On the 30-day voyage home aboard the Pacific mail liner *SS Manchuria*, I had had plenty of time to do some thinking on what I'd do when I got home.

No; I wasn't going to mooch on my Lola Ninay anymore. Never.

I wasn't too sure I could resume my college work at Berkeley in the fall as by this time a good slice of Lola Ninay's assets had been eaten up during the liquidation of her ill-fated bank and my father was barely making enough in a law school he was conducting.

So my mind was made up. The least I must do was work my way through college, whether at home or abroad.

BACK IN MANILA, I had hardly made the rounds of my relatives when I immediately took a second grade civil service exam. I don't quite recall the subject given, but I was lucky to pass it, and I suspect I was promptly offered a job mostly because I spoke English with a slight nasal twang, just like the chaps at Boone's did.

I was excited when I was instructed to report to the offices of the Bureau of Agriculture at the old Hotel Oriente building near the Binondo church. My eligibility called for a clerical job, so I was all set to sit behind a desk. You can imagine how I felt when I was told what my job was: hog inspector! Wow. That almost floored me. Me, a college boy, an *Americanito* — that's what the early *balikbayan* boys were called then — and a budding banker, messing with pigs!

But the item offered ₱50 a month, a princely sum then for a green 18-year old. And anyway, this was going to be temporary until I could get set to resume my college work. So, quite reluctantly, I took the job. That fateful day when I saw my first hog, little did I know I was destined to work

on animals the whole of my professional life.

My duty was to see that the hogs brought in by provincial suppliers were fit to be slaughtered for human consumption. I had been briefed on how to detect a deceased hog; look out for "downers" those hogs that didn't have the energy to scream nor stand up on their feet; and watch out for those red spots in the animal's abdomen for these were a sure sign of hog cholera.

The landing point for these hogs where I presided under the pompous title of "Inspector of Hogs" was called the Murallon, a strip of land along the north side of the Pasig river towards the Bay from the Puente de España. If the hogs passed my inspection — and quite a number didn't as I was quite strict — these animals were corralled near the slaughter house around the corner of Azcarraga (now Claro M. Recto) and Elcano, near the Divisoria market.

In point of fact, my inspection was rather cursory, intended more as a preliminary screening job since more technically qualified inspectors still had to examine every carcass before this was released from the slaughterhouse. In the final phase, the inspectors slashed the hog's cheekbone to look for *Cystecircus cellulosi*, pearl-sized cyst which showed the presence of tapeworm.

MY FAME AS A cracker jack at the English language must have spread fast all the way up to the bureau headquarters. Before long, I was rescued from the hogs and assigned as private clerk to Dr. George E. Nesom, director of the bureau. Dr. Nesom was a heavy-set mild-mannered gentleman who impressed me as a square shooter.

I hit it off well with Dr. Nesom right from the start. Officially, I was his private clerk but I knew he found me more handy in bridging the language gap. That was why he took me along in his many excursions to the provinces.

His immediate boss was the famous Secretary Dean C. Worcester, the erstwhile member of the Schurman Commission who had gone up to the cabinet to head the Department of Agriculture. Mr. Worcester was a well-built gentleman with a Van Dyke beard who later became a controversial character. Tagged by Filipino nationalists as an imperialist, he felt alluded to in the celebrated editorial in the *El Renacimiento* entitled, "Aves de Rapiña." He sued for libel, won the case in the American-dominated Supreme Court, resulting in prison terms for the editor and the permanent closure of the paper.

Worcester was an expert on Philippine flora and fauna and was fond of exploring the Philippine hinterlands. One day, he asked Director Nesom to accompany him on a trip to Baguio. Nesom, of course, took along his star interpreter and that was how and why I made my first trip to Baguio.

A TRIP TO BAGUIO in those early years of American occupation was an adventure by itself. You spent the whole first day on board a crawling train all the way to Damortis and bivouacked for the night there. Then, very early the next morning, you took some kind of a covered wagon drawn by four or six big American mules. Most of the rivers had to be crossed right through improvised pile of rocks on the river bed as there were very few bridges then. Virtually the whole road up the mountains was a one-lane affair so

your wagon had to stop at certain gates to let the oncoming wagons through before your wagon could proceed.

It was a thrill watching those big mules negotiate hairpin turns. The thought that you really can't control those mules like you do vehicles with brakes kind of scared you everytime the wheels got too close to the edge of the road where you had a full view of the labyrinth hundreds of feet below.

Finally, we reached Baguio around nightfall, badly shaken during the long wagon ride but pleased to inhale the soft and cool mountain air. But at once, a bit of sour note: the American bosses walked right into the uppity log cabin called the Pines Hotel while we Filipino subalterns were billeted in a tent camp nearby. I did not protest, but the discrimination rankled back of my mind and stayed in my memory bank for many years to come.

The bureau had established a cow ranch and horse breeding station at Naguilian, an hour away by horseback, and we had to go there almost daily in the course of Dr. Nesom's inspection tour. Strictly green as a horseman, I soon developed blisters in my hind quarters.

ONE DAY Secretary Worcester, like a true ex-professor of archeology and anthropology, decided he'd blaze a trail through the hitherto uncharted mountain forests that separated Baguio from the China sea. So off we went, the Secretary, Dr. Nesom, Msgr. Petrelli and a few guides. And I.

Seeing as I was young and raw, Secretary Worcester gave me a word of advice early in the trek. Careful when

you cross rivers, he had told me. When the horses are tired, they like to take a dip in the cold mountain streams and sometimes forget you are aboard. The trick is to hold the reins tight with your left hand and with your right pull the horse's tail straight up everytime it starts to kneel. That way the horse won't lie down on you.

But I was a smart, stubborn lad and didn't heed the Worcester advice. Sure enough, I got dunked into the first big river we crossed beyond Naguilian. I had to be fished out of the rapids. And my raw blisters, when the cold water seeped into them, ouch!

I was too fagged out when we reached Bauang to join Worcester, Nesom and company raise their mugs of beer to celebrate what was then claimed as the very first Baguio-La Union trans-forestal crossing by any government party.

BACK IN MANILA after a few weeks, Dr. Nesom called me in one day for a chat. "Victor," he said, "your country has a really serious problem. The rinderpest plague is killing many of your animals. Without them your people will starve. And there's not even one Filipino veterinarian available. So why don't you go back to the States and study to become a vet?"

I was impressed. I recalled what my father had counselled me earlier about the choice of a career. He had said there are three things to consider: what you like, what is realistic and within your reach and, most important, how you can help your country best.

Did I like working on animals? Well, frankly I was repelled by the stench and noise that greeted me upon my

first encounter with hogs at the Murallon, but after a while I got used to it. I even began feeling important because I thought I was saving the population from being poisoned with diseased pork. Once I was away from the Murallon for a couple of days, and what do you know: I actually felt queer and uneasy missing the hog aroma and their deafening squeals.

What career was realistic and within my reach? Well, Lola Ninay's bank was gone so the compulsion for me to study banking was no longer pressing. But then Lola had a 500-hectare farm in Calumpit worked by tenants who depended on carabao power. So if I did take up veterinary medicine, there were at least hundreds of Lola's animals and those of the tenants I could save from rinderpest for a start.

How could I help the country most? Dr. Nesom had appealed to me precisely by tickling my patriotic instinct. And besides, how would this sound this time: Dr. Victor Buencamino, first Filipino to earn a degree in veterinary medicine!

The idea became more and more attractive with each passing day, and when, after a while, I got exposed to the rinderpest drive, having been promoted at double the pay to do the documentation work at the serum laboratory of the bureau, the urge to save the animal population of the land simply got into my system.

My start at the serum lab was really the beginning of my interest in what I consider an epic: the 30-year battle against rinderpest. And that's quite another story.

12

WE LOVED OUR HEROES AND OUR COUNTRY THEN

Greasing was a sport that took no more substantial variations in government corridors.

I WAS 18 WHEN I first returned home after six long years of stay in the U.S. and one of the first things I noticed was that anybody who belonged was somehow involved in civic activities. There was a strong sense of nationhood and this feeling was most deeply demonstrated during the commemoration of Rizal's martyrdom.

I do not now recall the precise circumstances, but my guess is that I did not have to be prodded hard into serving as assistant marshal in the big Rizal Day parade of 30 December 1907. It made me feel great seeing my name in print in the official program, along with names that had since become familiar in history books. For a chap my age to break into such distinguished company was quite a feat. I was treated like I was a comer.

I get a big kick everytime I thumb through the official program of that particular Rizal Day celebration. It was an offering by the "Pueblo de Manila." In those days, this

was the biggest of national holidays and everybody who was anybody was involved. The lineup of the Comite General de Festejos showed the relative importance of the personages at that time.

For example here was the Comite Ejecutivo:

Presidente ..... Sr. Sergio Osmeña
Vice-Presidente ..... Sr. Rafael Palma
Secretario ..... Sr. Manuel L. Quezon
Vice-Secretario ..... Sr. Jose P. Katigbak
Tesorero General ..... Sr. Teodoro R. Yangco

As you can see, Don Manuel was outranked by Don Sergio in the protocol list, but even then, the firebrand from Tayabas already had a way of wangling out a star billing for himself.

For after the grand civic parade at the Luneta, the only oration, other than one by Governor General James F. Smith, was delivered by the assemblyman from Tayabas, the Honorable Manuel L. Quezon. Speaker Sergio Osmeña, the No. 1 leader, had to be content with being master of ceremonies!

The grand parade was led, after the grand marshall and the mounted police, by a cavalcade of gaily decorated horse-drawn carriages carrying bigwigs in government, from Osmeña on down. Even the Partido Nacionalista's executive and district committees came out in full force, complete with a symbolic float eulogizing Rizal, plus a brass band of its own.

Political leaders professed love of country as a sacred duty then, and these leaders showed this spirit by exhibiting their devotion to Rizal. A show of fiery nationalism was most effective in winning votes.

The parade started at 7 in the morning from the Plaza de Binondo. It snaked down Rosario street, an important shopping center then, and on through the Escolta, across Sta. Cruz bridge and on down to the Luneta.

Every bureau took part, most of them with floats and bands. But the largest participation came from the schools and colleges. I'm sure that then, as now, this school participation was more or less compelled by official circulars, but I can attest to the fact that in those days the students who took part in such parades were truly imbued with patriotic fervor and were honored to be given a chance to participate.

Then, as now, too, the more affluent business houses were made to sponsor the expensive floats and were tapped for donations to finance the show. Snacks were served in the grandstand and children who took part in the parade were given cookies and soft drinks. And the Meralco, already on the sucker list even then, was made to give free rides to students who took part in the proceedings.

The afternoon of Rizal Day was devoted to sports: baseball between the Germinal Cigarette Factory and the Bureau of Printing teams; football between Sandow and Liguero; followed by *carrera de cintas* and some *ejercicios-militares*, all held at the Camp Wallace on the east side of Bagumbayan.

The grand finale of the Rizal Day celebration was a *velada literario musical* at the Grand Opera House. The tone was set by an oration by the Hon. Macario Adriatico, assemblyman from Mindoro then regarded as one of the nation's finest orators.

There were several declamations, mostly on Rizal, topped by an original tribute in rhyme, *Ante la tumba de Rizal*,

by the famous poet in Spanish, Manuel Bernabe. In those days declaimers and orators were lionized even more than basketball stars are glorified today.

In between the elocutions, there were selected arias from the operas *Carmen, La Boheme* and *Tannhauser,* and the final number was a playlet on Rizal by the durable writer in the vernacular, Severino Reyes. As the curtain dropped, the band and the choir burst out with "una apoteosis con un gran himno triunfal, poesia de F. Ma. Guerrero y musica del Mtro. J. S. Hernandez."

There was something to being away from home so long that made you appreciate your homeland more deeply. Perhaps it was your awareness that no matter how well you fared in so advanced a country as the U.S., you knew you did not belong there. That was why taking part in the big parade as one of the marshals meant so much to me. I was so emotionally touched. It pains me to realize that with the passing of years, there has been a gradual lessening of devotion to Rizal — and to the country too.

THAT YEAR 1907, was a particularly big year for us Filipinos. On October 16, 1907, the first Philippine Assembly was inaugurated. I am reminded of this event because to this day I have kept in my scrapbook a copy of an official program containing in great detail the day-to-day actvities planned for the visit to the Philippines of then Secretary of War William Howard Taft.

In the minds of many Filipinos of that period, Taft was a returning hero. First as head of the civil commission and later as civil governor, Taft had been credited with having

popularized the slogan, "the Philippines for the Filipinos." Since the establishment of the Assembly represented a big leap in the direction of gradual Filipinization of the government, it was fitting that Taft should be commisioned by the U.S. government to head the official delegation that formally inaugurated the first elective legislative body of the land.

Poor William Howard was literally drowned with hospitality from the moment his ship approached Corregidor the morning of Tuesday, 15 October 1907, till his departure 20 days later.

As the good ship *McClellan* entered the bay, the sirens at the Insular Ice Plant and at Engineer Island announced to the excited populace that the personal representative of the President of the United States to the inauguration of the First Philippine Assembly had passed Corregidor.

In midbay, he was greeted by one of the biggest water parades ever organized. There were some 30 motor launches in all, comprising the full complement of civilian watercrafts in the whole harbor, all gaily decorated with flags and buntings, each with a band and all blowing their whistles full steam upon sight of the *McClellan.*

Protocol was strictly observed. The lead launch, the motorboat *Bohol,* carried Governor General James F. Smith, Major-General Leonard Wood, the commanding general of the Philippine Division, and the commander of the Philippine Squadron, Rear Admiral Hemphill. Also aboard the lead launch were the members of the General Committee on Arrangements headed by His Honor, the Mayor of the City of Manila, Felix M. Roxas. The committee included a nondescript assortment of Filipinos and Americans including such big names as Tomas Arguelles (who was to become my father-in-law), Dr. Justo Lukban, Dr. Santiago Barcelona,

Leopoldo Kahn, Mariano Limjap, Pablo Ocampo, Francisco Ortigas, Dr. Salvador V. del Rosario, and Dr. Trinidad H. Pardo de Tavera.

Also aboard the lead launch was a lesser light named Brig. Gen. John J. Pershing then commander of Fort McKinley and a subordinate to General Wood. Pershing, who as you know, rose to become the commander-in-chief of the victorious U.S. forces in World War I, also was the grand marshal of the big parade that was to escort Taft from the landing point at the Captain of the Port's office across the river from Fort Santiago all the way to the Ayuntamiento in the Walled City. Route of the parade: from the Captain of the Port's office via San Fernando, General Blanco bridge, Calle Rosario, Escolta, Bridge of Spain, Plaza Lawton, Bagumbayan, Calle Concepcion, Calle Victoria, Calle Magallanes, Calle Santo Tomas, to Plaza McKinley and the Ayuntamiento.

The curious thing was that the protocol list for the parade listed the delegates to the newly-elected First Philippine Assembly next to the bottom of the line, below the bureau chiefs and provincial governors and ahead only of municipal presidents.

This item amused me no end everytime I recall that latter-day legislators were to be just as shabbily rated in the public esteem!

But the following day, Wednesday, 16 October 1907, was their big day. The Assembly was formally inaugurated at the Manila Grand Opera House — it was the biggest available hall in the city then — with just two speeches on the program: by Secretary Taft and Governor Smith. The honorable assemblymen then came on their own when they were honored at a reception given by Taft. I'd say that

by and large, these assemblymen and their successors remained fairly honorable, at least up to the outbreak of World War II.

That night, the assemblymen were again honored guests at a reception and ball at Malacañang. It was an austere affair. The only side entertainment was a rendering by the Constabulary band of Chopin's Moorish suite, *The Courts of Granada.*

The common people of Manila celebrated, too. There were free shows, first come, first served, at the Rizal theatre where Aurelio Tolentino's drama, *Ang Bagong Cristo,* was presented, while at the Grand Opera House the *bakya* crowd enjoyed Severino Reyes' musical comedy, *Minda.*

The afternoon of inauguration day, while Taft was resting for a change at Malacañang, the common people were enjoying a great field day: baseball at the Paco baseball park, and simultaneous sports events at Camp Wallace, the Luneta, Calle de Moriones, Calle de Cervantes and Calle de Bustillos. The events included climbing greased poles, catching a greased pig and scrambling for greased coconuts with coins inside the nuts.

It's curious how fond of greasing our people were then, a habit which took on more substantial variations in government corridors in later years!

Another curious note: in those days, professionalism was strictly small time. Winners of the basketball games received "commemorative medals" while cash prizes ranged from one silver peso to the winner of the foot race to a fantastic ₱30 prize to the winner of the bicycle race.

The rest of Taft's stay was devoted mostly to inspections of U.S. installations in Baguio and Subic and to making

speeches at the Philippine Normal School and the University of Santo Tomas. At that point in time, the great University of the Philippines, which later produced most of the men and women who were to build — and ruin — the nation, was not yet.

Taft left the morning of 4 November 1907 amid the fanfare of another land and water parade. The visit must have done Bill Taft a lot of good. Soon afterwards, he became the President of the United States.

13

EARNING WHILE LEARNING AT CORNELL

I scored a benchmark victory for equality of pay. But where is it now?

BY THE TIME I first returned home in 1906, the American administrators had seen the urgency of training enough Filipinos to carry the brunt of national development on a long-range basis. One reason was that the American technicians who had been brought over usually had only a two-year tenure and it was not easy to persuade qualified people back in the states to venture forth in a strange country where guerrillas were reputed to be giving the American soldiers what now appears to be a foretaste of the Vietnam debacle.

Officially, the American administrators had made it of record that they came here primarily to prepare the Filipinos for self-government. Education was the main thrust. Thousands of teachers came over aboard the U.S. Army Transport *Thomas* to start the program of mass education while, simultaneously, hundreds of select bright Filipino boys were sent over as *pensionados* to enter American universities.

But nationalist-inclined historians contend all this was just a cover to make the Philippines safe for the American export market.

It is futile to debate now what the real American motive was. The fact is that a new generation of Filipinos learned to sing the *Star Spangled Banner* by heart and became familiar with Patrick Henry's cry on liberty. The Filipinos soon enough developed a taste for American exports, so effective was the promotion program to sell America to what they called the "natives of the Philippine Islands," a really milder term, compared with the Spanish *Indios*. You must admit that, if nothing else, the Americans were experts in the art of the hard sell.

I recall all this to drive home the point that this high-pressure type of American salesmanship also worked in reverse and did not do me much harm personally. For example, when I got ready to embark on my second trip across to pursue a career as animal doctor, my mentors did all they could to sell me to the people at Cornell and "to whom presented."

That was the salutation of a letter placed in my possession under the letterhead of the "Office of the Governor General of the Philippine Islands" and dated 13 August 1908, incidentally the anniversary of the American occupation.

The letter said:

TO WHOM PRESENTED:

This will serve to introduce Mr. Victor Buenocamino (sic), a young man of this city who is about to leave for the United States to enter Cornell University to continue his studies.

Mr. Buenocamino has been employed in the Bureau of Agriculture by this Government and he and his family have been known to me

for many years. I take pleasure in recommending him to the favorable consideration of all persons to whom he may present this letter.

Very respectfully,
(Sgd.) JAMES F. SMITH
Governor General

I DO NOT RECALL how I rated such a letter from the governor general, no less, but I suspect this was the handiwork of my mentor, Dr. Nesom, who himself on 7 August wrote a similar introductory note under the letterhead of "The Government of the Philippine Islands, Department of the Interior, Bureau of Agriculture." It certified that I was "a native of the Philippine Islands" and that as an employee in his bureau the last two years I had shown myself "to be a young man of energy, ability and integrity." When I read that part, I hardly recognized myself. Signing as director of the bureau, Dr. Nesom took the trouble to add that I was going to Cornell "with hearty good wishes of the entire personnel of the Bureau of Agriculture." Wow!

Dr. Nesom addressed another personal letter to Prof. Thomas F. Hunt at Cornell saying I was a young man "of exceptional ability, and that if Professor Hunt should need my services in a clerical capacity he felt sure I could render him "satisfactory service."

As you see, this Nesom fellow was perceptive. He knew I was not going as a *pensionado* and might have to do some odd jobs to support myself at college. He must have perceived, too, that although my family was reputed to be fairly well-to-do, I would not have slaved like I did at the bureau if I did not need the pay.

Well, I finally sailed aboard the Army Transport *Thomas* one August day and made it to Ithaca, New York, in time for the fall opening of classes. With all the recommendations in my pocket, I found no difficulty enrolling and getting adjusted at Cornell.

When I left Manila, I lugged along a Remington typewriter which I had been using since I learned the touch system at Gregg Business School. And since I had also learned a little shorthand, I made it a practice to take notes during lectures. Then I typed several copies of these notes after I had discovered that many of my classmates were willing to buy them for five cents a page. I also accepted typing jobs for fellows writing their theses. I did not exactly become a millionaire in my newly discovered business but the extra income, added to $75 I was receiving from home every month, enabled me to enjoy life on the campus like I was some kind of celebrity.

In those days, government *pensionados* managed fairly well on $37.50 a month.

I had a flair for good living and I did not miss a chance to earn whatever I could to augment my purse so I could live well. For board and room at Mrs. McNamara's, a dormitory near the campus, my bill was $7.75 a week — $5 for meals and $2.75 for the room. I plunked down another $5 a month for the rental of a piano which I kept in my room. I liked to tinker on the piano. It soothed my nerves, and I didn't mind if it cost me double the room rate.

When I learned from the dormitory manager that he was in need of a stoker for the duration of the winter, I volunteered for the job. It involved my rising before five in the morning to run down the basement where I shoveled coal into the furnace to heat the dorm through the day.

Have you tried to get up early in deep winter when your room was icy cold? It wasn't such fun, I tell you. But you got used to it after a while and I thought it actually developed my muscles and my lungs. Only, I'd often see myself in the mirror all masked with soot after shoveling coal and I kind of felt queer.

But the thought that I was earning all of $2.75 a week for this little chore — enough to pay for my room — this thought actually made me enjoy my odd job. Inside me, I felt proud.

Making money, I discovered, was no picnic and I think that all my life I appreciated the value of money more because I had to work like hell for most every penny that I earned as a youth.

I DID NOT FEEL too lonely at Cornell. Anytime I felt I needed to unwind after a hard day dissecting carcasses of animals at the surgery class, I'd retreat to my room and tinker with my rented upright piano. Nothing soothed me like doing a chorus of a current hit on the keyboard.

Then there was a small crowd of Filipino students who got together and organized the Philippine Association of Cornell. The big day we always celebrated was Rizal Day on December 30. I was elected president of this association during my junior year, succeeding a bright engineering student, Ambrosio Magsaysay, who had earned the distinction of being the first Filipino appointed as a teaching assistant at Cornell. (Don Ambrosio, uncle of President Magsaysay, went on to become the first Filipino general manager of the Metropolitan Water District.)

All of us Filipinos were at the same time members of the Cosmopolitan Club. Each nationality in the club took turns presenting a cultural program. In one such program, the Filipino group decided to do a *cariñosa* dance number and since we had no females, we had Tom Mapua wear a woman's wig and dress. He was a hit as a *cariñosa* dancer.

I remember this particular program because we did a little stunt to attract a crowd to the Cosmopolitan Club. Tom sat in a palanquin which we paraded around the campus on a cart while we barked something like "come and see this unique folk dancer from the Philippines." We drew a capacity crowd that evening. (Tom Mapua became a noted architect and was founder of the Mapua Institute of Technology.)

The Philippine Association served an important function: it took upon itself the job of enforcing discipline among our countrymen. We wanted to make sure that none of us would do anything at Cornell to tarnish the good reputation of the Filipinos.

One day, a newcomer from the Philippines, who shall remain unnamed, came to Ithaca to enrol at Cornell. Somehow, word reached us that this chap had annoyed some pretty coeds by making eyes at them. The Association conducted an investigation, decided that the newcomer was undesirable and took steps with the university authorities to turn down his application for enrollment. He left town in a jiffy.

Somehow, we Filipinos felt we were a little more privileged as a nationality group than other foreigners at Cornell. Reason: the president of the university was Dr. Jacob Gould Schurman who headed the first civil commission sent

to govern the Philippines. We were confident he would have special consideration for us in case we had any problem.

While I did not quite qualify for a Phi Beta Kappa key, I managed to pass all my courses without a hitch. On my third and final year round about final exam time, a messenger handed me a cablegram while I was in the dining room. I was filled with anxiety. What bad news could this be? I suspected some tragedy in the family, for in those days one did not spend the high cost of cablegrams unless there was an emergency.

While my heart pounded, I decided not to open the envelope. If there was bad news, I did not know if I could stand the shock and I did not like to make a scene in the presence of so many of my fellow students in the dining room.

Leaving my food mostly untouched, I rushed to my dorm, closeted myself in my room and slowly opened the envelope.

It contained only two words: HERMANO ABOGADO and was signed, PAPA.

So, Philip finally made the Bar! Was I happy there was no tragedy. And happier yet that my brother had followed in the footsteps of my father.

I sank in my bed, quite exhausted with emotion, and vowed to myself I'd make my family proud of me, too, by passing the finals with flying colors. And so, the next couple of weeks up to exam time, I crammed like I never did before.

The cramming paid off. My final average was 87% — not bad at all for a foreign student.

AND HAVING AT long last earned the degree of doctor of veterinary medicine, I lost no time applying the hard-

sell technique in lining up a good job at home.

I thought that with my previous contacts in Manila, they'd be just dying to give me any job at any pay I wanted. After all, I was now an authentic doctor of veterinary science. But no, it was a rule that whoever wanted to join the veterinary service in the Philippines must first pass a competitive examination conducted by the U.S. Civil Service.

I took the exam about a month after graduation and after another month, I received my report of ratings from the Civil Service Commission in Washington. A transcript of the report follows:

Subjects	*Relative Weights*	*Ratings*
1. Letter writing	1	85
2. Veterinary anatomy and physiology	2	75
3. Veterinary pathology	2	81
4. Veterinary practice	4	78
5. Training and experience	1	70
Average percentage		77.90

Having passed the U.S. Civil Service exam, it occurred to me that I should have the status of an American veterinarian and therefore I must demand the pay given to any American in the same position. This idea was unheard of. The starting salary of a vet in the U.S. government service was $1,400 and the practice had been to offer American vets coming to the Philippines an extra allowance of $200 a year as an inducement for them to leave their homeland.

I sent word to the bureau in Manila that if I was not given $1,600 or ₱3,200 for starting salary, or at par with American vets, I would rather go straight into private practice when I got home.

My demand created a heated controversy at top level in Manila. Copies of records which I was able to obtain later showed that while my old mentor, Dr. Nesom, was strongly for giving me ₱3,200 at once, the director of civil service in Manila, Mr. B. L. Falconer, was opposed. The case went all the way up to the office of the governor general. Falconer contended that the salary paid to a Filipino in the Philippines should not exceed what an American would receive for the same position in the U.S., namely, $1,400.

But Dr. Nesom was equally adamant. In a memorandum to Governor Forbes, Nesom argued firstly that I obtained my degree without assistance from the government, whereas Filipino students then taking up veterinary science both at home and abroad were all *pensionados*. Then he added:

> It is highly desirable for the good of the veterinary corps that Dr. Buencamino be appointed at the regular salary of ₱3,200. Otherwise, his ambitions will be thwarted, and undesirable complications will arise regarding his status in relation to American veterinarians. It is believed that any other action would discourage other Filipinos from obtaining a veterinary education at their own expense.

On August 10, 1911, Governor Forbes sent this cablegram to the secretary of war in Washington: "Referring to telegram from your office of the thirty-first ultimo, Buencamino appointed veterinarian. Salary adjustment after arrival in Manila."

So when I sailed for home via Europe this time, I knew I would get my appointment, but the matter of pay was still up in the air.

When I arrived in Manila on Christmas Eve of 1911, an appointment was waiting for me, effective as of the day of my arrival. I was appointed veterinarian in the Bureau of Agriculture. Salary: ₱3,200 per annum!

I considered it a landmark victory for racial equality. I am told my case did in fact set a precedent.

But today, 64 years later, I note that mine had been a losing fight after all. Foreigners doing the same job in the Philippines usually receive higher pay than Filipinos. This makes me very sad.

14

A FUN TOUR OF EUROPE — ON A BUDGET

Total freedom was not unknown among London lassies 60 years before Woman's Lib.

THE FOLKS BACK home apparently were as excited as I was when, after three years of really hard work, I was conferred the degree of Doctor of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell. My grandmother, Doña Ninay, had died and her surviving husband, Don Flaviano, took it upon himself to outdo my departed Lola in spoiling me. After all, I was Lola's pet grandson. I had heard her say so herself.

So one day, upon learning that his grandson had become the first animal doctor in the land, he sold one of the little real estate assets left behind by Doña Ninay and sent me all of $3,500 with instructions that as a fitting reward I was to come home via Europe and points east.

The fight against rinderpest was raging back home, but I figured if the bovine population of the Philippines survived for three years without me, the bureau wouldn't miss me another six months or so. So I very carefully planned a vagabond journey through Europe.

I decided on a tourist budget of $20 a day, though $10 was ample in those days. If I should spend less than that on any one day, I could splurge a little more to the extent of that savings the next day. And if I spent more, then the following day was to be a 24-hour period of abstinence.

BY THIS TIME, I had learned enough about travel to know that you could have more fun in a strange city if you had some local contacts there who could take you to the best places and coach you on where to get the best service at the least cost.

At Cornell, the Cosmopolitan Club had reciprocity arrangements with the *Corda Fratres,* a counterpart international hospitality group for foreign students in certain European cities. It did not take me long to compile a mailing list of *Corda Fratres* in the cities I wanted to visit. Invariably I asked them to help me arrange a visit with the college of veterinary science if there was one in their cities as I was anxious to learn anything new in my field.

On my previous departures from Manila, I must have carried only some kind of improvised travel papers as I don't recall having been issued a passport. But this time I had to have a passport, so I went to Washington to apply for one.

While in Washington, I ran into the then Resident Commissioner Manuel L. Quezon. Although he knew my father well, this was the first time I met him. He tried to make me feel at home, took me out to lunch and even offered me a job as some kind of assistant at the Resident Commissioner's office. But I told him many cattle and carabaos were dying daily back home and I felt I could be more useful to the

country if I went home. He understood. When I bade him goodbye, little did I know I was to become one of his trouble shooters later, that he would greatly influence the direction of my life and that one of his daughters would become my daughter-in-law.

The people at the Bureau of Insular Affairs, which then handled the affairs of Filipino *pensionados* and other students, were very accommodating. They knew I had passed the U.S. Civil Service examination and that an appointment was waiting for me back home. So they took care of shipping my things straight to Manila from New York and helped me get my passport.

At that time the State Department issued a passport that looked more like a sheepskin diploma. It was a 12-by-18-inch affair done in Old English script with the seal of the United States in the center. It described me as "a citizen of the United States" and it requested that I be accorded all the assistance and protection I might need while abroad. But it did give me away as a native of one of the U.S. possessions because at the bottom of the passport was a notation, "Insular No. 49."

I did not notice it then but the clerk who wrote my description on the passport was both flattering and insulting. He said my forehead was broad, which pleased me because the old folks back home used to say people with broad foreheads were usually wise ones, the breadth of the forehead being an indication of one's being brainy. But if I had noticed it then, I would have objected to his description of my nose as "broad" and my complexion as "dark." I suspect that this clerk was a racist or a member of the Ku Klux Klan.

And so to New York for the embarkation. I had chosen for my passage only the largest and most luxurious liner afloat, the *Mauretania,* flagship of the British Cunard Lines. She was a 50,000-ton baby that towered over the piers. When I entered the ship, I thought I was stepping into the grand ballroom at Versailles as described in history books. The lounges were fully carpeted, the walls full of mirrors. She sure was a floating palace.

The dining room was a huge hall that, I calculated, seated around 500 passengers per shift. I was pleased to note there was a seat reserved for me. I sat among an all-white group who were at first a bit indifferent. But I must have impressed them when I greeted them in the King's English with a slight New England accent. They heard me rattle off my orders from a French menu like a native continental. And when they learned I had just graduated from Cornell with a doctor's degree my seatmates actually showed symptoms of slight inferiority complex.

The four-day voyage was all too short. I had made many friends, including a number of cute numbers, but there really was not enough time to domesticate the wild ones, even for a veterinarian. One thing I noticed, though: on an ocean voyage, people seemed more friendly and the girls more romantic. It was nothing for them to pose with me in pictures cheek to cheek. I collected quite a number of such pictures with the aim of impressing my friends in Manila where ladies would be scandalized if you touched their fingertips.

There was no dull moment on board. There were deck games all day and parlor games or silent movies at night. Dinners were rather stiff affairs, with people all dressed up.

For me, at least, the voyage served as a finishing school on social etiquette.

The liner finally docked at Southampton the morning of the fifth day out of New York. We were promptly guided to a train nearby and that same afternoon we hit the fabled London town.

I DON'T QUITE RECALL now whether he had been sent to fetch me at the Victoria station by the *Corda Fratres* people or through some other contacts, but there he was: Mr. Jose Ventura, a fellow Filipino, in person. Was I pleased!

Pepito said not to bother going to a hotel. He had an extra bedroom in his apartment not far from the Commercial School where he was studying. And in fact I was fortunate because there was some kind of commencement program at his school that afternoon and he had a big reception all lined up for me right that very evening.

Pepito had invited a coed from the same school for dinner at the Tivoli, some kind of a classy theater-restaurant, and his girl friend had invited a classmate who was to be my blind date. I tell you, these Filipinos abroad do work fast!

We were all set to sample the soup after a couple of martinis when my partner, whom we shall call Mabel suddenly suffered from hysterics. Being a horse doctor, my first thought was to rush her to a hospital for humans. But once we were in a cab, she insisted on going to her apartment instead as she was feeling better. She was rooming alone.

At her apartment, I administered on her the best therapy within the ken of any vet: hot and cold towels on her forehead, some sort of sponge bath, light stroking around her

neck just like the way you fondly stroke an appreciative Pomeranian puppy.

When she showed signs of having fully recovered, I started to gather my coat, ready to say good night. Though all kinds of nasty ideas were racing through my mind, I was determined to show her that Filipinos were perfect gentlemen. But she gently pulled me to her bed and, under the circumstances, I had to demonstrate that Filipinos could rise to any challenge to their manhood. At a time when live-in affairs between the sexes were totally unthinkable, I can attest to the fact that at least this one London coed whom I encountered on my very first night on the European side antedated today's practitioners of total freedom by a good 60 years.

The next few days, Pepito took me around touring. And to me, the high point of my London visit was not the Tower, nor the Crown jewels nor the changing of the guard but my visit to the London Royal Veterinary College. The plant was comparable to Cornell's.

Every evening I had a date with Mabel. When I told her I was moving along to Paris the next day, she proposed to come along with me. I began to worry, but I did some fast thinking. I told her this was my first trip to France, that I did not know the language and won't it be better if I went on ahead and, once I knew my way around, she could then follow me and we'd have that much more fun together?

It took a lot of persuading, but before relenting, she handed me her pair of pearl earrings. "Take this with you," she whispered, "as token of my love and so you won't forget to wire me when to follow you in Paris." I thought this was an odd way to post a performance bond. She should

have kept something valuable from me, not the other way around.

Anyway, I took her earrings with me to cut the argument short. Once in Paris, I sent her jewels back by registered mail. I did not give any return address. That ended my exciting interlude in merry ol' England.

MY NEXT STOP was Brussels. There was the standard American Express tours which included an excursion to the battlefield of Waterloo where Napoleon met his doom, and I made a side trip to a pension where a historical marker said Rizal had stayed there. I also searched in vain for the grave of my uncle, Jose Abreu, who had died there many years earlier.

Then to Paris! She was every bit of a jewel city that the geography books billed her to be. After my duty visit to the veterinary school at suburban Alfort, I squeezed all that I could out of my $20 daily budget to savor the gaiety of the city. I had little appreciation of the fine arts then as now, but a tour around the Louvre made me marvel at the works of the masters.

Among the Filipinos I met in Paris was young Honorio Ventura (who later became secretary of the interior). He was touring Europe also as reward for just having finished school at the Ateneo. Coming from a family of sugar barons, Honorio had been fortified with all of $5,000 for this trip.

Honorio was a romantic soul. He met a vivacious Costa Rican lass and fell madly in love with her. When I met him about 10 days later, he told me he had cancelled the rest of his European itinerary, for almost every bit of his budget

had disappeared after taking his Costa Rican dream girl to the best niteclubs and after buying her a few gifts. He headed straight for home.

All of which strengthened my resolve not to be blinded by dames and to spend no more than $20 a day no matter how pretty my date. This became my article of faith the rest of my journey.

IN THE SENSE that visiting museums and palaces and cathedrals had by now become somewhat monotonous, I'd say my trips to Berlin and down to Rome were rather uneventful. That went for Madrid, too. But Barcelona was a little more exciting.

There I fell into the company of some fast fellow countrymen. There was old Marcos Roces, a colleague at Boone's some 12 years earlier. Then there was Don Valentin Ventura, a contemporary of Rizal, and the writer, Feliciano Basa. And there was a Señor Mensa, manager of the hotel where we were staying and himself a man about town, especially among the theater crowd.

The current hit in Barcelona was some kind of a musical comedy in which a number of charming *señoritas* were featured singers. Señor Mensa took us in tow one evening straight for the stage back door after the show and sure enough he had the singers lined up, one for each of us. The No. 2 star was assigned to me.

Our agreement was that we'd throw all of $20 each into a common kitty and Señor Mensa was to be our disbursing officer *de officio*. Fantastic how $100 put together could charter a whole night club in old Barcelona.

These went on for days, or rather, nights. But after the initial group bash, my No. 2 songstress, whom we shall call Margarita, and I hit it off by ourselves into more secluded love nests. What I consider a miracle was not that Margarita was no less human than Cordelia of St. Louis or Mabel of London, but that you could have all the fun in the world in the best places in Barcelona at $20 or less a night.

After a while, Barcelona was just another city to a tourist getting bored with historic relics. And I might never even have recalled anything about that port city were it not for a swinging singer called Margarita.

MY SEE-SAW ROUTE next took me to the old Moorish palaces at Granada, Seville and Cordova. And here, I redeemed myself. In the course of my visit to the Colegio de Veterinario in Cordova, the students asked me to give them a demonstration in spaying, the common term for removing the ovary of a female dog to prevent it from messing up rugs and upholstery by eliminating its in-heat periods. We called this operation in the trade "ovariotomy." It was a relatively routine surgery at Cornell but apparently something new in Cordova. And since my Spanish was passable, my lecture that accompanied my surgery demonstration seemed to have impressed the young Spanish vet students around me. And so there I was, feeling totally superior to a race of people who had oppressed my ancestors for 400 years.

I caught the German liner *Prince Ludwig* at Gibraltar en route home. She was a tiny ship compared with the *Mauretania,* perhaps no more than 20,000 tonner, but I found the much smaller crowd aboard much more congenial.

The boat stopped for a while at Port Said before entering the Suez Canal and then again at Suez city on the southern end of the canal. My recollection of both places was that Egyptian vendors were all over the place, hawking souvenir items, including bits of rugs.

Our next step was Colombo. I remember the place because a shipmate on board was a fellow Cornelian who insisted on showing us around the Ceylonese capital. I remember that their beaches and coconut palms could have been a piece of Luzon.

Round about this time, I was chasing the belle of the tour, a pretty daughter of a minister who was en route to China to convert the heathens there into the Christian faith. She was nice and very pleasant company but I was no match to her in quoting passages from the New Testament. Mostly for this reason I didn't get to first base with her. I am mentioning this little episode by way of confessing that I had had my share of frustrations with women, too. That fiasco was good for me. Before then I was beginning to suspect I was irresistible.

The *Ludwig* hugged the coast all the way to Hong Kong and swung back through Manila on her return trip to Europe. I disembarked at one of the new piers on the south harbor the day before Christmas in 1911 to the welcoming arms of relatives and friends and amid advance publicity which, I suspected, was released by Dr. Nesom's boys at the bureau. The clippings said something to the effect that the first Filipino doctor of veterinary medicine was returning home in triumph after earning his degree at Cornell and after spending six months visiting the great centers of veterinary science in Europe. As you can see, the Manila newspapers were already exaggerating, even then.

That same afternoon I called on Dr. Nesom who welcomed me by handing me my appointment as veterinarian at ₱3,200 per annum. The day after Christmas I was off on my first field trip to Camiling, Tarlac, straight to the front line in the war against rinderpest.

15

THE PHILIPPINES' GREATEST CONTRIBUTION TO THE WORLD OF SCIENCE

When quarantine was enforced to fight rinderpest, farmers chased the government men with bolos.

ALONG WITH MASS education, perhaps one of the more significant achievements of the American regime in the Philippines was the successful battle against rinderpest. It was a saga that took all of 30 years and one in which Filipino veterinarians took a progressively more important role as the campaign was intensified.

Rinderpest was not indigenous to the Philippines. It was believed the plague was brought over by animals imported from the Asia mainland. The revolution and the ensuing insurrection had almost wiped out our herd of cattle and carabaos and one of the first acts of the Philippine Commission was to authorize the immediate importation of 1,000 carabaos for propagation and for use in rice farming. It was in the course of these importations that the first signs of rinderpest were noted.

The plague spread so fast that an estimated 80% of any group of animals exposed to the virus perished. Rinderpest threatened what little there was of the cattle and carabao population that had been painstakingly raised after the insurrection. A concerted program to combat the disease was therefore launched sometime in 1906.

This was the year I was forced out of the University of California by the catastrophic earthquake. I went home for the first time in six years and, as I have recounted earlier, I soon encountered my first hog, marking the fateful start of my getting hooked for life to animal work.

I had been catching on to the swing of my work as Director Nesom's side-kick, when one day, he told me he hated to let a good man go, but there was an urgent need for a good administrative and records man at the Rinderpest Serum Laboratory and I'd be foolish not to grab the job since it was paying all of ₱100 a month. Imagine: double my pay! And besides, said Dr. Nesom, I was moving up to a more challenging job under a good man who headed the lab, Dr. Alonzo Sheck Sheally. "But do get in touch," Dr. Nesom told me. "I still think you're cut out to be the first doctor of veterinary medicine in the Philippines."

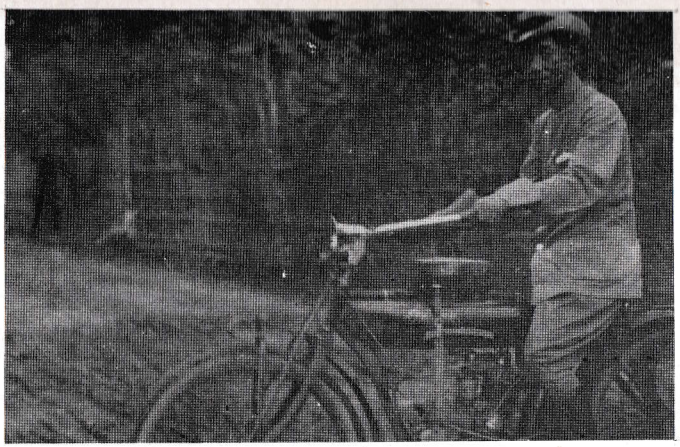
AND SO, ONE DAY in 1907, I reported to Dr. Sheally at the laboratory, an old frame house at the corner of Rizal Avenue and Tayuman street which had been used by the Bureau of Health for the manufacture of small pox vaccine.

The serum project fascinated me. The principle of immunization had been known and successfully used in the fight against small pox, but the application of the principle to fight rinderpest required a laborious trial-and-error research.

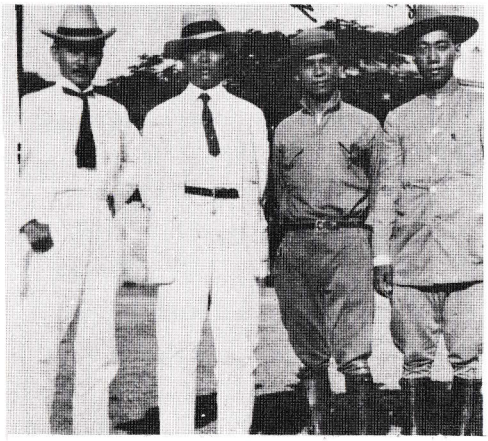
These coeds were from a girl's school in Syracuse. Note the high fashion in ladies' swimsuits in 1910.

The black derby hat was popular all over Europe in 1912. This was taken in front of the house where Rizal stayed in Brussels, Belgium.

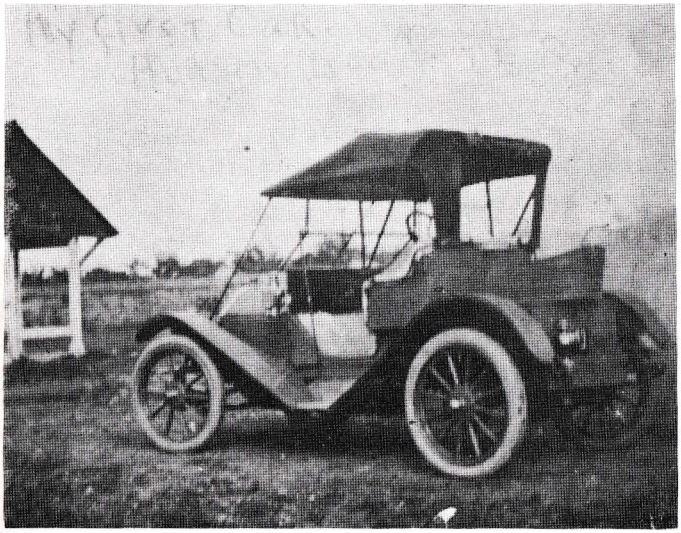
Aboard the Mauretania, young travellers were romance-prone during the five-day voyage across the Atlantic. The sport cap was fashionable for well-dressed men.



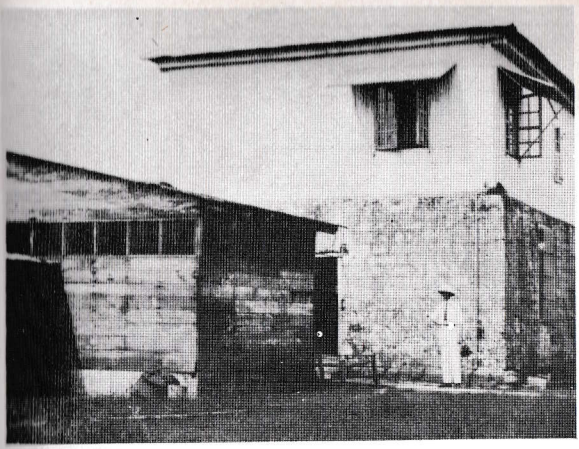
The Bureau gave me a high-powered Indian motorcycle so I could travel over Luzon during the crucial years of the campaign against rinderpest.



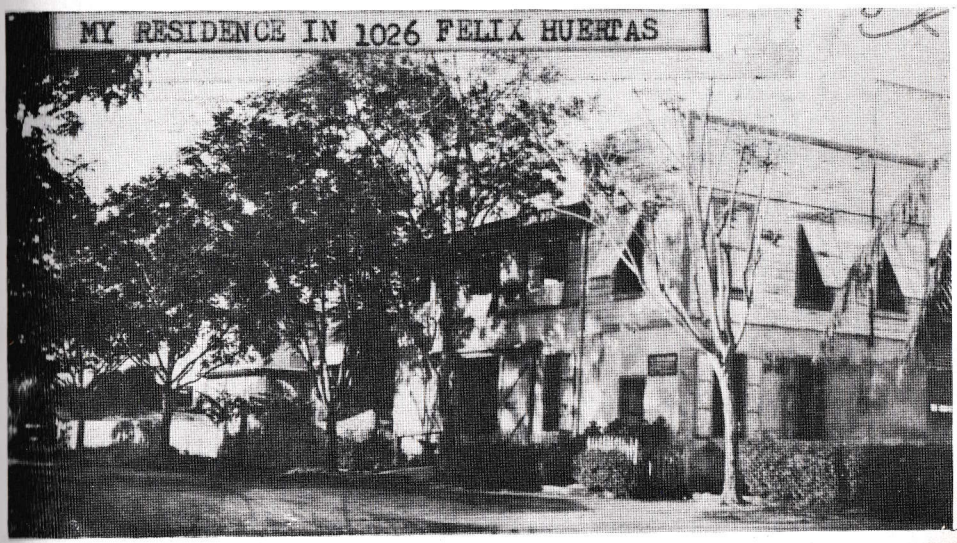
The first Filipino vet, right, waged war against rinderpest and dressed like one at war. My assistant, Mr. Nieva, and I were received by provincial functionaries at a Central Luzon town.



This was my first car, a second-hand Hudson Roadster, model 1916. I was among the first youngsters in town to own an automobile.



This ramshackle of a building on the corner of Rizal avenue and Tayuman street in Manila's Sta. Cruz district housed the first College of Veterinary Science of the University of the Philippines in 1912. I helped organize its first professional curriculum.



This was the first private veterinary hospital in the Philippines. The end of the building at right was my residential quarter. The clinic and wards were on the back side.

Governor General Francis Burton Harrison, second from right, was the best loved of all American chief executives. With him in photo taken at Sibul Springs in the early 20s were, from left, Luis de Leon, myself, Mayor Felix Roxas of Manila and, next to the governor, my brother Philip.

The idea was to extract serum from animals that had been injected with virulent blood from rinderpest cases but had recovered and were therefore presumed to have developed anti-bodies in their blood.

The yard back of the lab had room for some 200 cattle and 50 of these were kept in the sheds. They were to be injected with virulent blood from cattle infected with rinderpest. It was my job to keep a chart showing the daily temperature of each animal and keeping track of its reaction.

A bit on immunology: Animals given virulent blood injection are classified into two classes: reactor and non-reactor.

The reactor are those animals whose temperature have risen to 39 and over and showed other symptoms besides fever, such as bloody diarrhea. The period of reaction is between 7 and 10 days or more. The animals that got sick are called reactor. The serum obtained from them is potent for immunization. But to obtain much more potent serum, reactor animals are injected with virulent blood every 7 days in increasing dozes of 25, 50, 100, 250 and 500 cubic centimeters. These animals are called hyper-immunized and the serum from them is exceedingly potent.

Non-reactor are those animals which, even after injection of virulent blood, do not become sick. Their temperature do not rise. They are called non-reactor. The serum obtained from the blood of these animals is not potent.

It took at least five husky men to subdue an animal, tie up its legs and lay it on its side on an extracting table. A large needle, about an eight of an inch in diameter, was used to pierce the cow's neck through to its jugular vein. Blood spurted out like a geyser through a rubber tubing which connected the needle to a flask. About three liters of blood were extracted from each animal.

This blood was allowed to coagulate. In the process, some clear liquid floated above the blood. That was the serum.

The serum was collected in 10-liter flasks which contained some 1 1/2 solution of the preservative phenol and then sent out to the Bureau of Science on Herran street where the sediment was removed by centrifuging.

The pure serum was then packed in 500 cc bottles, about the size of the San Miguel beer bottle, and kept under refrigeration until shipment to the field. In shipping, the contents of these bottles were placed in thermos containers covered with ice and wrapped with barks of banana trees.

Initial reports from the field were disheartening. Animals that had been given 50 cc doses of serum were not protected. Increased doses were therefore given, some up to 250 cc and the protection then was much improved.

IT WAS NOT until much later that further improvements in the immunization against rinderpest were developed and in the meantime the plague was spreading fast. Stringent quarantine measures were introduced which met with strong resentment from the farmers who owned the animals. There was urgent need for communicating with the farmers, for informing them about the critical measures that had to be taken. Much of this communication gap could much more easily be bridged if there were more Filipinos with technical skills available. And up to that point, there was not even one Filipino veterinarian!

It was at this time, around August of 1908, that my mentor, Dr. Nesom, called me in one day and told me time

was of the essence, that I should make up my mind and take up veterinary medicine back in the United States. Which I did.

I earned my doctorate in veterinary medicine at Cornell in 1911 and returned to Manila on Christmas Eve of that year. My appointment as veterinarian in the Bureau of Agriculture took effect upon my arrival and the day after Christmas I was off on a field trip to Camiling, Tarlac, at the head of a quarantine task force.

As you can see, the situation was so critical I was not even given time to make my duty visits with my family.

It was critical because by this time the feeling against the government quarantine measures had built up to a point of violence. You couldn't really blame the farmers, neither, The word had spread across the countryside that these government men were precursors of evil for everywhere they went to try and cure animals, many of these animals died.

It is necessary to know what a carabao meant to a farmer to understand his hostility. The carabao was life itself. It drew his plow in the field, carried his harvest on its back, provided milk. The carabao was so precious it was usually kept in a comfortable area under his nipa hut and cared for like it was a member of the family.

But now these government men were taking his carabao away and confining it in a roofless corral with strange animals of other farmers and given strange medicine that was known to have killed more than cured. And on top of it all, the poor farmer had to lug his carabao feed over his own shoulders all the way to the quarantine site. Naturally the farmer rebelled against this.

There had been so many cases of violence, of farmers chasing the government men away with bolos, that by the

time I joined the campaign as a full-fledged vet our team had to be accompanied by platoons of Philippine Scouts. The battle against rinderpest had to be carried out by force.

And in the meantime, we Filipinos on the team started a campaign to inform the farmers about the progress that had been made in making the serum more effective. We told them why they must gamble on having their animal treated as there were less chances of their carabao surviving without this treatment.

LUCKILY, SOME DRAMATIC developments were being achieved at the serum lab. It had been found that by inoculating rinderpest virus into animals from the island of Dalupiri off Cagayan in the Batanes group, which island had been totally rinderpest-free, the result was that the blood of this Dalupiri stock became very "virulent" and that a simultaneous injection of virulent blood and reactor serum in proper doses was a very effective formula for immunization. This system was called "active immunization."

Then came a breakthrough. Dr. William Boynton, chief of the research division of the bureau, in collaboration with then Major Raymond Kelser of the U.S. Army Veterinary Corps, (he was later to become the first general of the veterinary corps) developed a rinderpest vaccine under a research program supported by a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation. They ground the issue from the thyroid glands of an infected cattle and administered doses of it on animals. It was an effective vaccine!

At one time they had a problem: they did not have the right equipment for grinding the tissues fine enough for

injection. Dr. Boynton appealed to the College of Engineering of Cornell University and before long a especially designed machine arrived.

The Boynton-Kelser team pursued their research until, after a few years, they were able to perfect an anti-rinderpest vaccine in tablet form that was found almost 100% effective. In this research breakthrough, they were assisted by two of our very first graduates at the U.P. College of Veterinary Science, Dr. Teodulo Topacio and Dr. Ildefonso Patdu.

In the words of the Rockefeller Foundation, "the Philippines' greatest contribution to the world of science is the discovery of the rinderpest vaccine."

And so, as the technique improved and better drugs were developed, rinderpest was gradually licked. The erstwhile hostile farmers reluctantly yielded their animals more and more. Government teams combed all islands with more effective tools and were now considered friends, whereas they were derisively called "Dr. Damulag" or "Dr. Kalabaw" in the early stages of the campaign.

I had by this time moved on to other pursuits, but my interest in the rinderpest wrive never waned. In fact, even as I went into private practice years later, I engaged in the manufacture of anti-rinderpest serum.

Sometime in the early 30s, the Bureau of Animal Industry announced that for all practical purposes, the battle against rinderpest had been won. I felt great inside me when I read that announcement.

16

THE "FATHER" OF VETERINARY MEDICINE IN THE PHILIPPINES

Luckily for the country, General Romulo did not follow his father's advice.

GOVERNOR Francis Burton Harrison will be remembered best for his so-called Filipinization program. He was for employing as many Filipinos as possible in positions of responsibility in the government. The problem was that there just were not enough of them. The *pensionados* were beginning to take over as fast as they returned, but it was obvious something had to be done to hasten the training program right at home if the need for more and more technicians was to be adequately met.

As I was the only Filipino vet available, it fell upon me to help develop a full-time course at the College of Veterinary Science at the University of the Philippines. So, after about a year in the thick of battle against rinderpest, I was pulled out from field duty and named instructor at the college. Up to that time, the college existed only in name. No Filipino students were interested. After all, who wanted to work on

animals when medicine and the law were so much more glamorous? (How true, even to this day!)

In those days, it was a practice to have the chief of the veterinary division of the Bureau of Agriculture serve simultaneously as dean of the college of veterinary science. The dean, Dr. Archibald R. Ward, called me in one day and said it was up to me to work out a full curriculum for the college and to try and attract students to it. What a job! I was to remain as a vet at the Bureau of Agriculture and at the same time work as part-time educator and, of all things, student recruiter! And without any increase in pay, either.

But I did not mind. With the help of a former classmate at Cornell, Dr. E.S.D. Marchant, we offered all the courses we could handle between us and left it up to the College of Medicine to accept vet students in such common courses as histology, embryology, bacteriology and therapeutics. Dr. Merchant handled courses in veterinary medicine and pathology while I conducted courses in general and special surgery, surgical exercises, clinics and obstetrics.

For classrooms we were given a small building in the quarantine station near the corner of Otis and Nagtahan streets where the Bureau of Animal Husbandry was establishing a new complex. So now we had a building and a list of courses. All we needed were students.

I was a bum recruiter. I could not persuade undergraduate students to become horse doctors. Then I hit upon a novel idea: why not try and interest some graduates in agriculture to take up veterinary science? After all, plants and animals went together and they'd be much better off as agriculturists if they were animal experts too. And all at government expense.

Sure enough this sales talk worked. For our very first students, we had the Hardy Four: three graduates in agriculture, namely, Teodulc M. Topacio, Ildefonso Patdu and Ambrosio Hizon; and one graduate in extension service, Ludovico Hidrosollo. Mostly because I succeeded in attracting the very first four students ever to enter our college, I was dubbed the Father of Veterinarians in the Philippines.

By the way, all four made good in their respective lines. Drs. Topacio and Patdu assisted Dr. Boynton in the research that led to the development of the rinderpest vaccine while Dr. Hizon engaged in a flourishing practice out in the provinces. Mr. Hidrosollo went on to become head of the Bureau of Non-Christian tribes and later he became senator.

We plugged along at the college for years, attracting anywheres from six to 15 students in any one year. After a couple of years, we moved the college to the same building at the corner of Rizal avenue and Tayuman street that had been occupied by the Serum Laboratory. Here, there was enough space for hospitalizing animals. We set up stables for horses and cattle as well as kennels for dogs. We accepted cases for hospital care so the students could acquire practical experience. Thus began, for the first time, what may be called the professional practice of veterinary medicine in the Philippines.

WHEN THE U.P. College of Agriculture was set up at Los Baños sometime in 1916, the vet college was transferred there, too. But I did not like to move there so I worked out an arrangement whereby I would establish a private veterinary hospital in Manila and the vet students could come over twice a week and work in this hospital as part of their

course in clinics. The arrangement was approved because there were no facilities for servicing animals in Los Baños. At that time, Los Baños was an isolated place with little animal population.

The arrangement was unprecedented. Up to this time, all professors at the U.P. had to serve full-time. The arrangement was mutually beneficial; I was elevated to associate professor of surgery and clinics at half the pay (that is, at ₱2,500 per annum out of the full-time item of ₱5,000) and I was free to engage in private practice.

One day in 1919, President Ignacio Villamor of the University of the Philippines called me in and asked me if I would be interested in becoming the first Filipino dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine. I was flattered. This was a great honor. But I had a serious personal problem at that time and I asked President Villamor to give me a few days to think it over.

The problem was that if I accepted the deanship, I would have had to stay and live in Los Baños. I would not have minded it myself, but what about Lolita?

Lolita was my choice for a life partner and I had planned to marry her shortly. She had been a city girl all her life and I was afraid she'd get bored and lonesome out in Los Baños. It was not practical for me to commute between Manila and Los Baños because in those days the highway was a rundown narrow affair and the train service was not so efficient. It took all of three hours to get to College, Laguna, either way.

Moreover, I felt that my private hospital needed my full attention.

"No, Mr. President," I regretfully told President Villamor later. "I'm sorry to have to deny myself such great honor." I then told him about my marriage plans and my obligation to the hospital. He said he didn't blame me at all. But he said I could remain as associate professor on a half-time basis if I so desired. And I did.

I remained on the faculty up to around 1920, when there were enough graduates to take over the teaching job.

WHEN DR. BIENVENIDO GONZALES became president of the U.P. after the war, one of his many wise moves was to return the College of Veterinary Medicine to the Diliman campus in Quezon City.

But the new dean of the College of Agriculture at Los Baños, Dr. Dioscoro Umali, had other ideas. He fought hard to get the college back to Los Baños. He said he had been promised generous grants from foreign foundations to rehabilitate and modernize the Los Baños campus, particularly the veterinary college.

I was out of the government by this time, but my old colleagues in the profession called on me one day and asked me to help them persuade the authorities to retain the college in Diliman. They had one big argument in their favor: a nuclear reactor was under construction at the Diliman campus. This was important to the college, my colleagues argued, because of the need for introducing nuclear techniques in the sciences, including veterinary medicine.

Luckily for them, a new president had been installed at the U.P.; Dr. Carlos P. Romulo. So we called on Rommy one day and presented our case. He said he was an educator

and a diplomat, not a scientist, and so he was taking my advice to recommend to the Board of Regents that the college be retained at Diliman. The Board, as expected, approved Romulo's recommendation.

Sometime later, I ran into Dean Umali and he made a cryptic remark that has stuck in my mind.

"You will regret that," Dean Umali said, referring to my having espoused the retention of the college in Diliman.

I had since then given Dean Umali's comment some honest reflection and I would like to make it of record that I now believe the long-range interest of the country would have been better served if the college had moved to Los Baños.

Here is why I have a change of heart:

All along, my orientation had been to give priority to the disease-preventive or disease-curative aspects of veterinary science. That was why I believed that the college should be located close to where students had ready access to clinics and laboratories as well as to reference libraries. Manila had these in abundance compared to Los Baños in addition to my rather selfish preference to stay in Manila when the college was first transferred to the Laguna site.

But now I realize that times have changed. Rinderpest had been licked and epidemics occur only rarely — and then these are now much more easily controlled.

Therefore, the new emphasis is no longer on problems of animal diseases. The current preoccupation is the development of techniques for mass production of animals to meet the burgeoning increase in the country's population.

And there is where I now agree with Dean Umali. With all the facilities for research and development that

Dean Umali has been able to harness at Los Baños, I am now convinced that courses in massive productivity can be more efficiently conducted at the Los Baños campus.

I commend this humble observation of mine to the kind consideration of the U.P. authorities concerned. And I hereby salute Dean Umali for his farsightedness.

Through all these years I never lost contact with the college. I gave the deans there all I could in the way of technical and material assistance. To this day I have served as senior advisor to the administrators of that school.

AMONG THE MEMENTOES that I treasure dearly is a diploma presented to me by President Carlos P. Romulo, testifying to the fact that the Board of Regents of the University of the Philippines had elected me professor emeritus of that great institution.

In his presentation speech during a huge student convocation, Dr. Romulo recalled an incident.

Sometime in 1912, he recounted, he was still in knee pants riding a tricycle in the yard of his home in Camiling, Tarlac province, when a veterinarian from Manila whizzed in on a motorcycle and conversed lengthily with his father, Don Gregorio, who was then governor of Tarlac. The veterinarian had come at the head of a team charged with the duty of enforcing quarantine regulations in connection with the fight against rinderpest.

Romulo described the vet as a personable young chap wearing leather leggings and a military hat and spoke English just like the American officers of the Scouts did who were in the vicinity, enforcing the quarantine rules.

When the vet left, CPR recalled, his father called him and said: "See that man who just left, son? And have you heard him talk English? That's Dr. Victor Buencamino, the veterinarian who has just returned from the States. That's the way I want you to talk English when you grow up."

Then Romulo recounted how, as publisher of the DMHM, he had directed his crew to hit the NARIC (See Chapter 27). "I must now publicly apologize to Dr. Buencamino," CPR said. "I was unfair to him. He was right and I was wrong. And it makes me happy to be able to confer this honor upon Dr. Buencamino who has devoted a lifetime of distinguished service to the university and to the country in general."

I was, of course, very pleased. But what stuck in my mind was his anecdote about his father wanting him to speak English like I did. I thought this was odd because I had never in my life left a mark as a speaker in any language, while Dr. Romulo, as you know, has earned a reputation as one of the ablest debaters and orators of the country.

I knew he did not acquire any speaking characteristics from me because I never pronounced "the" to sound like "dha." Moreover, I feel I should not be credited with that cute mix of Ilocano and Pampango accent that, many say, Romulo has refused all his life to shed off perhaps as a true mark of his obsessive nationalism.

What no one can deny is that the little boy in a tricycle who saw me for the first time in 1912 has travelled a long, long way from Camiling and I for one believe our country has been the better for it. I think he is the best known Filipino abroad.

I know CPR to be a consummate gentleman. He has a tremendous sense of humor. His collection of jokes — clean, green and witty — is fantastic.

I consider it a distinct privilege to be one of the few people to whom CPR steadfastly mails a postcard everytime he visits a strange country. Many of the cards are gems that show his penchant for light and laughter.

It's a good thing Rommy did not follow his father's advice. For if he had mistakenly taken me for a model, he might have wound up becoming a horse doctor and the Philippines might never have made such a proud imprint on the United Nations.

17

A CONFIRMED BACHELOR FALLS

Guys have a double standard: one for a sweetheart and another for a life partner.

SENATE PRESIDENT MANUEL L. QUEZON called me aside one day in 1919 and asked me a very personal question.

"Victor," he said, "how serious are you with Cristina?" (This name is fictitious but the person was real.)

It did not surprise me at all that he should confront me with that question. I had noticed that on a couple of social occasions, the dashing Senate President and No. 1 political figure had been eyeing Cristina, too.

You see, Cristina was one of my favorite friends. She was one of three famous sisters from a well-known suburban family, who were the toast of the social set. All three were striking Filipina beauties, with clear light-brown complexion we called *kayumangging kaligatan*. All three spoke beautiful Spanish. They sang and played the piano well. And all three were simply delicious sights on the dance floor. Only, in my mind's eye, Cristina, the eldest, was the most attractive of the three.

But while I enjoyed a reputation as perhaps one of the more eligible bachelors, I was no match as lover boy to Don Manuel. He knew it, too, but he was such a noble soul he did not like to start paying court to lovely Cristina if it meant his breaking my heart.

I answered his question by showing him a picture of the girl I wanted to marry. It was a photograph of a fair maiden named Miss Dolores Arguelles. We called her Lolita.

LOLITA WAS EVERYTHING, Cristina was not. She was no stunning beauty but one whose charm you appreciated gradually more and more the longer you beheld her. She spoke Spanish. Her piano was fair and, if she had her way, she'd rather sit out a *paso double* than hustle on the dance floor. She was quiet and unassuming, the ideal Maria Clara type.

Funny but I had two different standards. As a gay blade, I liked the social company of the beauteous and popular Cristina. But for the girl to become my partner for life, my choice was the less socially exposed, the *mahinhin* Dolores Arguelles.

Lolita came from a distinguished family who resided on fashionable Brixton Hill in Sta. Mesa, then one of the more ritzy residential districts of the city. Her father, Don Tomas, was a well-known architect.

I recall first meeting her sometime in 1915 at the mansion by the Ayala bridge owned by her classmate at the Assumption, Miss Esperanza Limjap (who was later to become Mrs. Sergio Osmeña, Sr.). The Limjaps and the

Buencaminos were old family friends and I frequently visited them.

Lolita, not withstanding her being rather shy, at once impressed me perhaps because she evinced no particular interest in me when we were introduced. I was half offended. Imagine; this girl in plain Assumption uniform snubbing me!

I guess that was why I liked her from the start. She did not swoon at my feet like many other girls did. She was challenging.

IN THOSE DAYS, it was rude to just walk up the home of the girl you admired and pay court. You had to be very sutble about it. You had to show your interest in her as casually as possible, almost as by a chance afterthought.

I hit upon an idea. Since Lolita had three other very eligible sisters, what could be more inconspicuous than a group of young men making a party of it and paying a casual social visit to a group of sisters? Surely, there was safety in such large numbers.

And so one day I rounded up my cronies. There was Cipriano Unson who was then some kind of a functionary at the Municipal Board of Manila. There was an engineer at the Manila Railway, Apolinario Baltazar. There was Antonio Torres who later became Manila's chief of police. And there were Feliciano Paterno and Ramon Arevalo. All of us had studied in the U.S. We were dubbed *Americanitos*. This was not necessarily a compliment. But somehow our gang behaved as though we owned the whole town.

We had sent word to the Arguelles home that we were launching an invasion and, to our surprise, we were received quite casually. The sisters were nice to us. If any of them was at all excited, they did a fine acting job not showing it.

I don't recall now what kind of conversation transpired on our first visit, but I'm sure we indulged in only some small talk. No doubt we spent more time sizing up one another. And right from the start, I served notice on my cronies that Lolita was off limits to them.

After about six months of this group visits, I gathered enough courage to make solo calls. I recall there was some inexplicable coldness at the beginning. I learned later that her sisters had warned Lolita against falling for me because I was notorious as some kind of a playboy.

Everytime I visited Lolita, at least one of the sisters was always near by. I tell you, it was not easy proferring my affections for Lolita in the face of such tight man-to-man guarding by the sisters!

How times have changed! In those days, a whole clan would form a phalanx to protect the maiden of the family from the advances of predatory males. Today, mothers let their daughters loose. Their biggest worry is how to protect their marriageable sons from falling into the clutches of predatory females!

My solo but unproductive visits went on for a year or so until one day I finally told Lolita there was no further point in hiding my true feelings. By this time, I had passed my 30th birthday and I thought it was about time I settled down. Lolita, who was some eight years my junior, was convinced I meant business this time. In fact, I talked a little business with her.

I said the hospital was by now a going concern. I said I still had a half item as associate professor at the U.P. I said there was a little monthly rental I was receiving for a little chalet I had inherited from Lola Ninay. I said I was embarking on what promised to be a profitable business of importing cattle on the hoof. And I said I think I was therefore in a position to take on a wife and raise a family. And, finally, I said, "Lolita, will you marry me?"

She didn't say a word. She just looked at me with a look that spoke a thousand words. For a moment that, to me, felt like eternity. We just sat there, speechless, and yet it was as though we were communing with one another. That night, I went home like I was floating in air.

When I visited her the following evening, I was determined not to be a sentimental fool. So I gave her a bit of warning. Just to be fair.

"You see," I told her, "of all the things I am doing, the one job I am determined to pursue is my career as veterinarian. And this means anyone who marries me has to learn to live with me in a makeshift apartment I built adjacent to my animal hospital.

"And I'd like to prepare your mind for the ordeal, Lolita. You see, that hospital is different. It's a hospital for horses and dogs. Have you ever been near a stable, Lolita? Or near a kennel?"

"Now, let me assure you, my boys flush the whole place every so many hours morning, noon, and night, but you know those animals, dear; they don't observe regular hours, and you've got to get used to animal odor."

"You may think you can't stand it at first, Lolita, but I assure you the horses' urine is mostly ammonia and in fact

it has disinfecting qualities. And after awhile you'll get used to it and you'll learn to stand it and not mind it at all."

Lolita just sat there, not saying a thing. But I could perceive that she was thinking that when one says "I do" she vows to have and to hold, in sickness and in health . . . and how did that solemn vow go on now?

THEN CAME THE HARDEST part of my whole courtship: I knew Lolita was (and still is) a devout Catholic and it was part of the ritual that before the wedding, both betrotheds should go to confession and then take communion during the wedding mass.

I decided I must be honest with her. It smacked to me of deception and dishonesty if I went through the confession and communion ritual when deep in my heart I did not believe in it. And so one day I took courage to tell her that I have neither confessed nor taken communion all my adult life and would feel like doubly sinning if I did then.

I bared to her my whole views on religion; that I did believe in a Supreme Power to whom I prayed in my own way; and that it would have to be part of our bargain that I shall totally respect her right to profess her faith in any way she wished but that she must be tolerant of my way of worship, too.

I was happy that she appreciated my sincerity and frankness. In fact she even went along on a secret plan I worked out in my mind just in case the priests at San Sebastian should make a grand issue of my failing to confess and take communion and then refuse to marry us.

My secret plan: if the altar should be closed to me at the very last minute, I would announce to one and all that the wedding rites would proceed in the terrace outside the church. I had alerted Obispo Maximo Gregorio Aglipay to be ready, just in case, and he assured me he would gladly celebrate the rites himself if only in appreciation of the generosity of my Lola Ninay (who had donated to him the site of the first Independent Church in Tondo, remember?) and because he was a close personal friend of my father's.

I must now make of record that the good fathers at San Sebastian already were practicing the spirit of ecumenism a good half-century before Pope John XXIII.

For without a hitch, the wedding bells rung out from the towers of San Sebastian the afternoon of April 26 in the year of Our Lord, nineteen hundred and nineteen.

BY ALL ACCOUNTS in the *La Vanguardia* and the *Manila Times,* it was the wedding of the year.

The six bridesmaids were the outstanding maidens of the day: Trining de Leon (who was later to become Mrs. Manuel Roxas), Esperanza Limjap (later Mrs. Sergio Osmeña), and Socorro Chuidian, Teresita Salgado, Consuelo Virtusio and Martina Paterno.

They were escorted by Horacio Chuidian, Ramon Arevalo, Ramon Araneta, Feliciano Paterno, Francisco Tecson and Jose Cajucom. All cronies of mine, they too were among the leading bachelors of our day. And, like me, they all wore "frocks," white tie, white gloves and tail coats that then, as now, were worn only on the most formal occasions.

From San Sebastian, a long motorcade carrying Manila's 400 proceeded to the Arguelles residence on Brixton Hill for the reception and garden party.

I was thumbing through one of my scrapbooks one day recently and I found a couple of handwritten notes on memo sheets that have browned with age. One note records that I had ordered the Tom's Dixie Kitchen to cater to the wedding. The supper was to be served buffet style, the tables decorated with flowers and there were to be prepared enough food for 400 persons. Including rentals of tables and chairs, my appropriation for Tom's was ₱900. The menu: pickles, olives, salted peanuts, hot bouillon, cold ham, cold turkey, deviled ham sandwiches, corned ox tongue, peppered cheese, chicken salad, potato salad, assorted cakes, fruit punch, ice cream and lemonade.

(I don't know how poor old Tom could possibly have made money serving all these at ₱2.50 the cover.)

The second memo in my scrapbook contains entries of actual expenses for the wedding. It showed I advanced ₱400 to my crony, Antonio Torres (who later served as Manila's chief of police) for decorations and other items. He had volunteered to do the decorations at the church and the Arguelles home. Out of this, Tony bought flowers for "damas y novia," decorate the church, pay deposits on the lights, hire carpenters to rig up an open air dance floor, and decorate a hired Berlina wedding car. The right side of the memo records that actual payments were made as follows: Church — ₱156.90 (I suppose the odd change represented tips of the sacristans), lights — ₱425.00, invitations — ₱218.50, orchestra — ₱90.00, drinks — totalling ₱358.50 itemized into burgundy, ₱318; beer, ₱20 (for all

400 people!!), and Watson, ₱20. There was an item for transportation totalling ₱78. Quite gratefully, I gave my friend Tony Torres a gift costing ₱60.

On the next page of my scrapbook, I had a typewritten list of some 300 guests (which makes me figure there must have been more than 400 persons, counting in the ladies) which reads like Manila's social who's who. There was a notable absentee: Senate President Manuel L. Quezon who had gone to Washington at the head of the first Independence Mission. Among those who traveled with Don Miguel were Lolita's eldest sister, Pacita, and her husband, Atty. Gabriel La O. I'll never forget this because Lolita was very much attached to her sister and she mailed to Pacita in Washington all our wedding photos, along with clippings, etc. Somehow, the package disappeared in the mails and that explains why, in spite of the fact that I am among the world's more avid collectors of souvenirs, I do not have today a single copy of my own wedding photograph!

Well, anyway, the wedding party was pronounced a social success. My cronies told me later they danced till the wee hours of the morning. I would not know. For sometime before midnight, I sneaked out with my bride and I brought her (I don't recall if I carried her through the threshold) to what, up to that minute, was my fairly well-appointed bachelor quarters atop the stables of the Buencamino Veterinary Hospital on Felix Huertas street. What a brave girl, Lolita! Spending her honeymoon night in my animal kingdom!

We retired early because by dawn we were to drive off for Baguio aboard a sporty Cadillac which a close friend, a Mr. Corominas who owned a long row of commercial build-

ings on Azcarraga street, had offered to me to use on my honeymoon trip.

We registered at the Pines, Baguio's only de luxe hotel. Honeymooning at the Pines was fun enough. It was doubly gratifying to me because I realized I had made a big leap forward from that evening in 1907 when I saw Dean Worcester walk into the Pines lobby, which was warm and aglow with flames from a big fireplace, while we Filipino subalterns were shown into a freezing tent outside.

It took days after our return for Lolita to unwrap and arrange the 190 packages we received as wedding gifts. In our shelves on Brixton Hill, we still keep to this day a number of wedding gifts item, notably some antique silver and china, which I reckon must be priceless collector's items today.

OUT OF THIS WEDLOCK, four children were born.

We named our first boy Felipe after my father and he was better known as Philip the Third to distinguish him from my brother Felipe II. Born on 28 March 1920, Philip went through La Salle, earned a law degree from the Ateneo and passed the bar, but he was more inclined to be a journalist. He volunteered in the army when the Japanese invaded the country, fought on Bataan, survived the Death March, joined the diplomatic service shortly after his marriage to President Quezon's daughter, Zenaida, and was one of those who perished in the massacre by dissidents of Doña Aurora Quezon's party on the forested road to Baler in April of 1949.

Our second child was a boy whom we named Victor Jr. Born on 27 January 1922, Vic also went through La Salle,

earned a commerce degree from the University of Santo Tomas, was one time president of the Manila Realtors Association, and at this writing had just finished serving his second consecutive term as president of the Philippine Columbian Association of which I was myself a president once. He is married to the former Bessie Ocampo, a writer, linguist and former beauty queen. Vic now works with me at AM-PARTS of which he is vice-president and treasurer.

We have two daughters: Dolores, born on 3 August 1923 and Guadalupe, born on 16 December 1925. Dolly holds a degree in music, having taken up voice culture under Maestra Jovita Fuentes at the Holy Ghost, and later served on the the Holy Ghost music faculty. She is married to Mr. Julio B. Francia, Jr. who was president of the Philippine Chamber of Industries for two terms.

My second daughter whom we call Neneng (Guadalupe) finished architecture, did some interior decorating and is married to an engineer, Mr. Jorge Paez. Both Dolly and Neneng had spent a couple of years at the Mills College finishing school in Berkeley, California.

I would like at this point to acknowledge the fact that the caring and rearing of these children had been the handiwork of my wife Lolita. Mostly because she had taken upon herself the entire burden of raising our children, I was enabled to devote my full time and energies to our people and to my professional and business responsibilities.

Lolita was particularly good at hosting small private parties. It was a pleasure inviting people for dinners at home because of the elegant way Lolita entertained them. At the risk of being immodest, I can say just about all the greats

and near-greats of our time had at one time or another been our dinner guests at the house.

Lolita was herself a part of the social set. She belonged to the crowd of the Mesdames Quezon, Osmeña and Yulo. Mrs. Marina Vargas and Mrs. Virginia Romulo were among her closest personal friends.

If I ever was able to do anything worthwhile at all, the credit goes to my beloved wife Lolita for her unfailing inspiration and support.

I count among my many good fortunes the fact that my wife and I were privileged to observe our golden wedding anniversary on April 26, 1969.

It was a relatively quiet and modest affair. A private mass was said for us by an old friend of the family, Fr. Pacifico Ortiz, S.J. (who, incidentally, accompanied the Quezon family to Corregidor and then to the U.S. up to the death of the President). The mass was held in the living room of my daughter Dolly in our compound on Brixton Hill. Dolly has been most assiduous in getting me to attend mass at every opportunity.

My sister-in-law, Mary Romero Buencamino, widow of my brother Philip, and my cousin Delfin Buencamino, a retired banker and businessman, stood as sponsors.

There was a small reception and buffet after the mass.

I'd like to say that although I did not take communion, as usual, I did say a prayer to the Good Lord for granting us 50 years of blessed marriage.

And I must add that I am most thankful to the Good Lord for still blessing Lolita and me with happiness and long life. To this day, Lolita at 81 and I at 88 are in fine health.

18

THE FRENCH CONNECTION: CIRCA 1920

In an international power play, a Filipino veterinarian hits the bullseye.

OLD ADAM SMITH once said that in a free enterprise society, people keep hustling to improve their economic situation. Stiff competition, he said, forces them to be more innovative. They never rest on their laurels.

That's what happened to me. You'd be satisfied doing fairly well as part-time professor, with a thriving veterinary hospital and a little side income from inherited real property. But no; I was always on the lookout for means of increasing my income and I figured I should take advantage of my expertise as animal doctor to add to my earnings.

I saw an increasing need for more and more rinderpest serum as the plague ravaged our cow and carabao population. That was why we needed a larger and steadier supply of hyper-immunized cattle from which to extract serum. That gave me an idea: why not import cattle from Hong Kong? Since these cattle were healthy and immunized, their beef was fit for human consumption. So they could be slaughtered

for beef after they had been bled for serum. Moreover, I had a little experience at the abbatoir when I was hog inspector, so I was somewhat familiar with the meat business.

That was the germ of an idea that plunged me into the cattle-importing business, a business that was later to eclipse all my other sources of income put together.

I decided to look for a partner, one with some experience in the business of importation. After all, I was a vet and I had never seen a bill of lading or a letter of credit, so I needed someone with experience in that line, plus enough cash to match my capital in this joint venture.

In those days, the recognized "cattle king" was a big businessman, Don Faustino Lichauco, who was already engaged in cattle importing. He had a cousin, a successful contractor, Don Ramon Soriano. When I broached to Don Ramon the possibility of our getting into partnership for the cattle importing business, he said, yes, without the least hesitation. I realized later that the feeling of rivalry was strong among relatives and I supposed Don Ramon was eager to show his cousin, Don Faustino, that he could be a successful cattle importer, too.

And so, sometime in 1920, Don Ramon Soriano and I organized a limited partnership under his name, capitalized at ₱30,000. To raise my share of the investment, I urged one of Lolita's sisters, Carmen, to match the ₱7,500 I had saved. Don Ramon was to attend to the importing end of the business while I was to handle the slaughtering and marketing end, plus the veterinary services. In the process, I was free to extract all the serum I needed, which I sold at the hospital for ₱30 a bottle. That was one of the main revenue-makers at my hospital.

Our initial cattle importation averaged 50 head a week. I organized a small crew of *matanzeros* who slaughtered the cattle around noontime and distributed the carcass by 5 p.m. The carcass was then prepared for sale in the market stalls by next morning and was usually sold out before noon.

I'D LIKE TO RECORD here some code of honor that prevailed in the meat retailing industry. The retailers were more or less not too educated vendors who rented meat stalls in the public markets. They received the carcass with a note from us stating the gross weight of their ration. They did not sign any receipt. They took our word for the weight. Without fail, before noon on market day, these stall holders would turn over to my collectors exactly the same bill and coins they received from the shoppers, after deducting what represented their profits for the day, of course.

And so every afternoon, my collectors took to my place at the vet hospital bagfulls of coins and crumpled bills, almost all of them smeared with cattle blood. It was with extreme patience that my poor wife Lolita counted these coins and bills. I can say now that in the more than 10 years that I dealt with simple folk who sold meat in the market stalls, I never ran into a dishonest one!

BUSINESS WAS GOOD. The first year, Don Ramon and I split a profit that I calculated to be almost 100% of capital. And so, propelled by what Adam Smith called the unseen hand that drives men to earn more and more, we decided to increase our capitalization to ₱37,500 each and embarked on

a really large-scale cattle importation, this time from Cambodia, then part of French Indo-China.

Here is where the Ramon Soriano firm began to have an edge over that of his cousin Don Faustino: Don Ramon had a veterinarian for a partner. The rinderpest and foot-and-mouth diseases were raging unabated and the government had to enforce extraordinary measures to quarantine imported animals. The erstwhile cattle king found the red tape more and more restrictive and his business began to suffer.

On the other hand, Don Ramon Soriano and I had little trouble complying with immunization rules. I myself went to Phnom Penh, capital of Cambodia, to set up a system of large-scale immunization before loading the cattle for shipment to Manila.

DURING MY STINT in Cambodia, I learned that when a country makes a diplomatic move, likely as not, there's a selfish economic reason behind it. I was a firsthand witness to an international power play involving two very unrelated items: oil vs. cattle.

The American authorities in Manila had noted that cattle imported from Cambodia were exposed to rinderpest and they promptly banned further cattle importations from that French Colony.

The French were furious. From the Soriano and Buencamino cattle importing partnership alone, they were grossing some ₱200,000 per bi-monthly shipment to Manila and they were not about to just give up that lucrative trade without a fight.

At that time, one of the biggest items of Cambodian import from the United States was kerosene which was used in the Cambodian hinterlands for lighting and for kindling firewood. So the French had an idea: If the American authorities banned their shipment of cattle to Manila, they were going to hit back by banning the importation of Standard Oil kerosene to Cambodia.

Whereupon, Standard pressured the State Department into ordering the American authorities in Manila to find means of resuming the cattle importation. Manila's reply was that the Cambodian cattle may come in provided the French guaranteed that shipments shall hereafter consist of only immunized cattle.

AND THAT WAS WHERE I came in. By arrangement with the Cambodian authorities, I went to Phnom Penh with a crew of Filipino "inspectors" to undertake a mass immunization of the herd before shipment to Manila. These inspectors, by the way, were the precursors of what today's ideologues like to call "barefoot doctors." They were not veterinarians by any means, but they had been taught the rudiments of injecting serum on cows and, once on Cambodian soil, they did their chore with the swagger of a professional vet.

They impressed the French authorities. Here were Asians looking no different from the indigenous Cambodians doing professional work in a country where natives were treated like coolies by the colonists. This was new to the French.

I found the French rather easy to impress. I must have been the first Asian doctor of veterinary medicine ever to barge into French Indo-China. Since I had an open ex-

pense account from the partnership, I put on a big show during my stay in Phnom Penh.

I took a suite in the city's finest hotel. I made protocol calls on French bureaucrats. And, finally, I threw a big reception at the hotel, with the cream of the French community in attendance.

That was a big P. R. triumph. I noticed that even the female of the French species accepted me in their exclusive socials. One of these mesdames was a torrid number, wife of a French bureaucrat who, by coincidence, had to travel to Saigon the next forthnight on an official mission. On the pretext that she was tutoring me in French, I escorted her almost every after dark, first to sidewalk cafes and then to dinners in out-of-way restaurants. I did not learn much French, but I suspect she learned that Filipino lover boys were a good match to anything the Paris apache he-man had to offer.

I'D SAY the French vets were quite professionally impressed, too. Within days after our arrival, our crew of Filipino technicians was hard at work, immunizing cattle at a rate the French had not seen before. While the French were using standard syringes of the size used for humans in injecting cows, we had American-made jumbos with needles the size of a fourth-inch nail, and we could immunize some ten times more cows in half the time than the French could.

The Phnom Penh trade was a laborious procedure. We had a contact man there, a Filipino mestizo named William Wilson, brother-in-law of Dr. Regino Ylanan of PAAF fame. Wilson did the buying for us. We had to deal with hundreds

of little dealers who collected the cattle from farmers in the hinterlands and corralled them along the shores of the Mekong river. When there were enough for a shipload, the animals were transported one by one aboard tiny sampans to the steamer which had to anchor quite a distance from the bank due to shallow sandbars.

Profits in this trade were high, but so were the risks. On one shipment, for example, our whole herd was almost wiped out when the vessel was caught in a typhoon in the South China Sea. The ship was tossed about like a dry leaf in a whirlwind and the poor cattle were smashed every which way against the steel walls of the holds.

It was a disaster for our partnership. The shipment was not insured. We either had to raise an entirely new capital or fold up. But Don Ramon Soriano was a gentleman. Perhaps in recognition of my personal efforts and my expertise in caring for the animals, he forthwith refinanced our partnership entirely out of his own funds.

And meanwhile, having learned our lesson, we devised portable wooden compartments measuring 1"x 10"x 9". The sides of the compartments were detachable so that when loading or unloading cattle the boards could be pulled out and later replaced. Once we had finished loading, the enclosures were replaced. Each compartment contained from 20 to 25 head. Thus, if a storm is encountered and the sea is unusually rough, the enclosures protected the animals from being smashed and injured.

WHEN THE INDO-CHINA supply began to dry out, we reached out for more distant sources. We chartered two

vessels which alternated picking up our supply of cattle from Wyndham and Darwin, Northern Australia. Each ship carried about 450 head of cattle per trip. But since the voyage from Australia took about 15 days one way, the two ships barely met our monthly supply requirements.

Then we encountered another problem. The Manila authorities completely forbade the landing of imported animals in Manila and environs as further quarantine measures against contagious pleuro-pneumonia and other diseases. This forced us to set up a slaughterhouse complex near the coast of the Sisiman cove in Bataan. We had to hire a 90-ton shuttle launch to transport the carcass every evening to Manila.

Round about the early 30s, Don Ramon had displaced his counsin as cattle king. And every year-end, Don Ramon and I paid ourselves fairly handsome cash dividends.

But this business was too good to last forever. The battle against rinderpest was finally succeeding and in the mid-30s, local cattle raisers lobbied for a law to ban totally the importation of beef cattle. I recall that it was Senator Juan Alegre, the Bicolano politico, who fathered the bill.

More than the profits I realized from the Ramon Soriano firm, I valued the experience in business that, I felt, helped enrich my background for coping with the many business problems I still have to face in my work-a-day world.

19

GUESS WHOSE STENCH: THE HORSE'S OR MINE

My hospital was a barn, but I was proud of the professionalism I practised in it.

FROM THE TIME I got a degree in veterinary medicine at Cornell, I felt it was my duty to establish what was destined to be the first Filipino private veterinary hospital in the Philippines.

And so, upon my return, I worked out in my mind some kind of timetable for this objective. I figured it would take about five years for me to accumulate the necessary capital for the hospital facilities while I was gaining enough practical experience to run a hospital of my own.

But events took such a turn around 1916 that I was driven into establishing my dream hospital about a year ahead of my timetable. The crucial factor was the transfer of the U.P. College of Veterinary Medicine to Los Baños. This meant that the university clinic we had set up and which had been building up quite a clientele at the Rizal Avenue site had to move out too, leaving a vacuum that was crying out to be filled.

Then, by a happy coincidence, round about this time, an American vet, Dr. W.W. Richards, who had been engaged in the business of shoeing horses, decided to return to the U.S. and he offered to sell to me his premises on the corner of Felix Huertas and Zurbaran streets.

It was fortunate for me, also, that U.P. President Ignacio Villamor considered it mutually beneficial for me and for the veterinary college to work out an arrangement whereby the students at Los Baños would come over to my hospital twice a week and do actual clinical work as part of their course in veterinary practice. I was to continue teaching and conducting the clinics course at half the pay of an associate professor. As I have mentioned earlier, this kind of a part-time arrangement was unprecedented, but the college did not have any other choice under the circumstances. As I have said, this was because there was not enough animal population at Los Baños to warrant the establishment of a clinic there.

The time was obviously propitious. I threw in all of my savings, about ₱5,000 in all, as down payment on the 2,500 sq. m. property of Dr. Richards. I assumed the outstanding installments due the San Lazaro Estate from which Dr. Richards had bought the property at ₱2.50 per sq. m. on a 10-year installment plan.

I worked day and night with a couple of carpenters fixing the stable-hospital for a handful of horses and established, for the first time, kennels for a dog hospital. And then I remodelled the dormitory which became my home.

When the clinic was finally ready, I had only a couple of houseboys to do the cleaning of the premises. Quite often, I had to haul the animal manure myself as the boys acted like it was below their dignity to do the messy work.

So there I was with a makeshift stable I called a veterinary hospital. I was the chief veterinarian, pharmacist, receptionist, nurse, accountant, clerk and janitor, all by myself.

Little by little, I added to the staff as qualified fellows became available. And as the clientele expanded, we added a few more stalls in the stable and the kennel.

My projection was that I should expect losses the first year and start breaking even or making a little profit from there on. It turned out I was too conservative. For my account book showed I had enough earnings to meet all current expenses right off the first month of operations.

Of course, as I said, I had some built-in advantages. All the dog-bite cases, which had averaged 10 a day at the college clinic, followed me at the hospital. I continued the horseshoeing business that Dr. Richards had left behind. And my clinic was just around the block from the Manila Jockey Club which housed hundreds of race horses in its stables.

I never was too happy dealing with the owners of the race horses. Anytime their racers got lame or started to sniff or had symptoms of diarrhea, they took them to my clinic. But what got me was that quite often, I'd get paid for the service only when their horses won a race. The odds, as racing *aficionados* will tell you, were against my collecting my professional fees for months on end, if at all.

After a few uncertain months, business started to pick up. It was bound to. The potential had always been there. In Manila and environs alone, I estimated, there must have been some 10,000 carromatas which served as principal means of transportation. Assuming a conservative average of two horses per carrier, I figured there were 20,000 horses in the

area and 200 of these on the average must require medication on any given day.

I suppose if there were the advertising facilities then that we have today I could have built the business much faster. But the word-of-mouth medium worked well enough for me and pretty soon I had to keep the hospital open as long as 16 hours a day to accommodate the increasing number of cases.

As a rule, only those with means could afford to take their pet dogs to my hospital. I charged them ₱2.50 for ordinary medication, most of them worm cases. That was twice the daily pay of a government clerk then. If the dog had to be retained for hospitalization, the charge was 50 centavos extra per night, complete with medicine and meals.

I charged also ₱2.50 per consultation on a horse and the hospitalization rate was another ₱2.50 per day. The reason the rate was higher on horses than on dogs was obvious: the horses required much more feed.

In all my practice, the record fee I ever collected for any one case was from a millionaire, Doña Carmen Ayala vda. de Roxas. We had to do a Caesarian section on her cute Japanese poodle . My clerk was under instructions to bill her ₱5 for the routine surgery at the end of the month, but the day following the operation, Doña Carmen sent a messenger with a sealed envelope containing a check for ₱50. In those days, that could buy about 25 sacks of rice, more than enough to supply the hospital with rice for the next three months.

MY LITTLE BARN of a hospital was no imposing edifice, but I was proud of what I considered a high standard of

professionalism that I managed to practice in it.

I had two distinct divisions in my hospital: one for small animals, such as dogs, swine and poultry; and another for large animals such as horses, cattle and carabaos.

I received the small animal patients, mostly dogs, in a neat and clean reception room. An assistant helped me lay the dog on a Monel steel table, a rarity in those days, where I conducted a thorough examination. If the dog patient required continued attention, it was placed in a kennel. A segregated section of the kennel was reserved for contagious cases.

On one side of the reception room, I kept half-a-dozen bell jars, about 10 inches in diameter and two feet deep. These jars were filled with various kinds of disinfectants. I dipped my arms in these jars after brushing and washing with soap and water.

On one side of the room was my pharmacy of which I was the concurrent pharmacist. And I was the records registrar, too. I kept a record of every animal patient's specie, sex, color, age, size, breed and use (for riding, for drawing vehicles, seeing eyes, etc.).

In those days, a vet had to be an all-around specialist. I recall that one day, when the globe-trotting Russian circus was in town, I had to treat a leopard and a couple of monkeys. Today a vet usually treats only one kind of animal for a particular type of ailment. It is said in jest that some vets would now treat say, only the right eye of a dog and send the owner with his pet to another vet down the hall who specialized only in treating left eyes.

In my large animal division, I received the "patient" in an adjoining yard. If need be, I squeezed the animal into

a stock for standing control. If surgery was needed, we laid the animal on a French operating table and I then did the surgery with all the precautions of a surgeon operating on a human patient.

MY REPUTATION as horse doctor must have spread far and wide round about the second year of operation for by this time I was in demand as retainer to some of the bigger establishments that had stables of horses. Among my retainers were the N & B Stables, which had about 250 horses; the La Palma de Mallorca Stables, 100 horses; the Quintos Stable, 30 horses; and the private stables of Don Antonio Roxas. My retainer ranged from ₱60 to ₱200 a month.

I was even frequently called for consultation in provincial stables. For every trip, for instance, that I made to the Hacienda Luisita in Tarlac, which was then owned by the Tabacalera, I charged ₱100, plus expenses.

I was also retained by big dairies, such as the Pacific Commercial in San Francisco del Monte, the Sta. Mesa Dairy Farm and two other small farms, one owned by a Japanese and the other by a Syrian. My biggest client was former Executive Secretary Frank W. Carpenter who was manager of a ranch containing a thousand head of improved native cattle cross-bred to Nellore or Brahma. His farm was situated at Novaliches, municipality of Caloocan, province of Rizal.

Secretary Carpenter, upon his retirement from the government, was appointed either administrator or liquidator of the Philippine Vegetable Oil Company. One of the prop-

erties of Philippine Vegetable Oil was a 1,200-hectare grazing land in Novaliches. I used to go there every Sunday to inspect the herd.

Upon arrival at Novaliches, I would mount one of the horses and, together with one of the cowboys, ride all over the ranch. This inspection tour took from 1 1/2 to 2 hours —a very pleasant undertaking, especially as Secretary Carpenter always had a nice breakfast waiting for me after the round.

Gradually, I got acquainted more intimately with Mr. Carpenter and he was so good that when I asked him if I could care for some 100 head of Masbate cattle in a corner of his ranch, he readily agreed. This little herd, by the way, was a joint venture between then Senate President Quezon and myself. Don Manuel wanted me to improve the Masbate breed. He had correctly surmised that by crossing the local strain with imported Nellores (Brahma), we could develop a breed which would be more adaptable to local climate.

But before we could perfect the experiment, the PNB decided to liquidate the ranch and that ended the careers of the Quezon-Buencamino duo as researchers in cattle genetics.

The ranch site, by the way, has been swallowed by urban development. It is now part of Quezon City, extending from the border of Caloocan to Novaliches all the way east to the Diliman site of the U.P. and on down to the Marikina valley area.

I must say of Frank Carpenter that he was a good friend of the Filipinos. He believed in preparing the Filipinos for positions of higher responsibility. When he was still in Malacañang, he had a group of Filipinos among whom were

Antonio de las Alas, Jose Sanvictores, Ludovico E. Hidrosollo, Francisco Delgado, and many others who became national figures in later years.

RETAINERS WERE a great institution. You got a check at the end of the month regardless of the services rendered. You were hired for the privilege of their consulting with you at anytime; that was besides the daily inspection of the stables together with an attendant who was the equivalent of a nurse. Simple cases were handled by the attendant while I handled the difficult cases myself.

Like one humid day sometime in the early 20s when one of my retainers, the N & B Stables then the largest outfit hiring out high-class *calesas,* rang me up and frantically asked me to attend to an emergency case. One of its horses hitched to a *calesa* had collapsed in the plaza in front of the Sta. Cruz church.

I grabbed my medical bag containing a series of bottles with medicines and some emergency instruments — a rubber catheter 1/8 inch in diameter and four feet long, a hand pump and a small bucket. When I got to Plaza Sta. Cruz, the fallen horse was surrounded by a large crowd of curious onlookers.

I opened the animal's eye. No hemorrhage. Pulse: fair. No hypertension. The animal was down but not struggling and apparently not in pain. So it was not colic, either. Very likely azoturia — a kidney trouble preventing urination.

But whatever the ailment, my first move was to induce bowel evacuation. Surgical gloves had not been invented then. I made soapsuds in a bucket of water, smeared the

full-length of my right arm with lather, making it very slippery. I thrust my hand into the animal's rectum slowly until I could feel the feces. One by one, I dislodged pellets of manure until the rectum was cleared. There was an awful stench and the people around me started to fall back, covering their noses. It was a toss-up whether the stench came from the horse or from me, for by this time, I was dripping with perspiration and the dust was caking all over my face. I suspected the crowd was pitying me more than the fallen horse.

After the bowel was cleared and with my arm still inside the rectum, I pressed downward over the horse's ischium near the bony formation of the pelvis until I was able to feel the urinary bladder filled with urine. I started to press the bladder with gentle pressure. No urine was voided. So that was it: the urinary canal was blocked.

I pulled out my catheter and smeared vaseline around it. I washed the horse's penis and slowly inserted the catheter into it until the bladder was reached. Out gushed dark urine, heavy with bloody infusion. You could see the great relief in the animal. It tried to stand up at once.

I have often been asked if I had ever been kicked by a horse while administering this emergency treatment which must have caused much pain to the animal. People won't believe me but it's true; there's some kind of a rapport between the vet and the horse as though the animal knew the vet was out to relieve it of its misery.

I drenched the horse with fluidextract of nux vomica, fluidextract of gentian, aromatic spirit of ammonia, spirit of nitrous ether and sufficient water to make half a pint. The horse drank it with gusto. In a minute, the *cochero* got it back in harness and the *calesa* was off again.

When I got back to the hospital, I dipped my arm into the bell jars with disinfectants, but still my arm reeked of the smell of the gastric juice. For several days, Lolita, my wife, avoided being near me in the house.

I sure have no illusions about the practice of veterinary medicine being romantic and glamorous. But tough cases like this fill you with a satisfying sense of professional pride.

I HAD MARRIED LOLITA round about my third year at the hospital and since she was rather frail, I imported a milch cow from Australia primarily to produce the milk I wanted Lolita to take every day. One Ayrshire milch cow from Australia cost ₱1,000 — a fantastic figure in those days!

A little later, we produced our own eggs as I had expanded to a little poultry which I started with about 50 Rhode Island Reds. But most of these were used for breeding.

My day was tough even after I had increased my staff to 16. Up at 6:00 a.m., I worked continually on stay-in cases till about 9 when I'd take a very light breakfast. Then a couple of hours receiving callers at the clinic after which, at 11, I made the rounds of my retainers. That lasted usually till lunch at 1:30 or 2:00. I never took an afternoon nap then. Back at the clinic after lunch there was an almost continuous flow of customers usually till 6 to 7 p.m. and sometimes much later.

Only after several years, when I could afford an assistant vet, was I able to sneak out late afternoons for a couple of sets of tennis at the Managumpay Tennis Club at nearby San Lazaro district.

A few of those who worked with me were formerly my own students at the U.P. They later made a name for themselves in the profession. There was, for example, Dr. Gregorio San Agustin who served as director of the Bureau of Animal Industry before the war, and Dr. Angel Gomez who became dean of the U.P. College of Veterinary Medicine. (Dr. Gomez, by the way, was the father of Dr. Quintin Gomez, the noted anaestesiologist.) Then there was Dr. Sixto Carlos, first of the noted Carloses who later set up their own flourishing vet hospital. And there was Dr. Aniano Estores who stuck with me longest and to whom, in appreciation, I turned over the entire hospital with my compliments when President Quezon drafted me in 1930 to return to government service. Dr. Estores very ably kept the hospital going until a few years after liberation.

All in all, I'd say my hospital venture exceeded my expectations. About the time I retired after some 15 years at it, the hospital was grossing an average of ₱4,500 a month — not peanuts at all at a time when cabinet men lived like kings at ₱1,000 a month.

What was even more satisfying for me was the thought that I was able to make use of my career at a time when it did the most good for our awakening nation.

It had not been a picnic at all, especially at the start. But precisely because of the challenge and the effort it required, I valued my work in this hospital as much as anything I ever experienced in my life.

20

THE MACARTHURS: LIKE FATHER LIKE SON

General Arthur deserves a niche in our history as a true friend of the Filipino people.

THE FIRST TIME I met General Douglas MacArthur was sometime in 1924 at the wake for Luisa Corazon Paz Quezon, the third child of the Manuel L. Quezons who had died in infancy. The general, then commander of the U.S. forces in the Philippines, was among the greats and the near-greats who had flocked to the Quezon mansion on Roberts street in Pasay.

I was a bit taken aback when he approached me. He was a tall, impressive personality with already a wide reputation as a hero of the Rainbow Division in the first World War.

"Are you the son of Don Felipe Buencamino?" he asked.

When I said yes, he asked me if I could arrange for my father to meet him. "I'd like to check with him some bedtime stories I had heard from my father, General Arthur MacArthur, and I understand your father may have some first-

hand knowledge about them," the general continued. (I don't know why he used the word "bedtime." I thought bedtime stories were fairy tales told to children to lull them to sleep.)

As it was a chance meeting, I did not take his request to see Father seriously. I thought he was just being polite. I figured that if he were serious about meeting my Old Man, he would make it a point to arrange for an appointment somehow. So I did nothing about it.

But late one evening a few days later, I got a call from the General. Would I come over quickly to his residence on Sta. Lucia street in Intramuros and see what was the matter with his Chow dog? It seemed the dog was in distress.

I was flattered. Considering that any number of U.S. Army vets were at his beck and call, it made me feel good that he should consult a Filipino vet to attend to his pet.

It was a routine case of indigestion and after a simple medication, the Chow was relieved. General MacArthur was grateful. A few days later, a messenger delivered to my office a gift package containing a silver cigaret case with an engraving which said:

"To Dr. Victor Buencamino
With friendship and esteem.
General and Mrs. Douglas MacArthur.
December 4th, 1924"

To this day I still keep this gift among my more treasured possessions. While I was attending to his dog, General MacArthur reiterated his wish to see my father. He said he was leaving soon for another assignment in the U.S., having just

been promoted in rank to major general, and he was eager to have a chat with Dad before he left. There was no doubt he really was in earnest.

THE MORNING OF 27 December 1924, my father and I called on the General at his office. We were received warmly by both the General and his charming wife.

It is fortunate that I have been able to conserve a copy of my father's own version in Spanish of his conversation with Douglas. Although I served as interpreter — my father spoke very little English and Douglas spoke just as little Spanish — most of the topics they discussed had slipped my mind over the past half century. Thanks to Father's version of his meeting with MacArthur, I am now able to record much of the essence of their exchanges which might well add some unpublished insights into the historical events of that period.

I do remember, however, a detail which Father just glossed over in his memoir. I recall distinctly that Douglas was particularly interested in what Father knew about the relationship between his father, Arthur, and a junior colleague, General J. Franklin Bell, who rose to become commander of one of the contingents of U.S. troops in the Philippines.

I gathered there was no love lost between Arthur and Franklin.

It seems that Arthur had done Franklin the big favor of recommending Franklin for promotions in the Army until he became Chief of Staff, but that Franklin failed to return this favor at a crucial moment when Arthur needed it most.

The story was that when Arthur was himself being lined up to become Chief of Staff in Washington, he could have made it if Franklin had favorably endorsed it. This endorsement never came.

Arthur never forgave Franklin for this ingratitude. We gathered from Douglas that when his father was dying sometime in 1912, a remorseful General Bell asked to be allowed to pay his last respects. Arthur turned him down flat.

UPON RE-READING my father's memoir, I now gather that there had been a sharp policy disagreement between General Arthur on the one hand and then Civil Governor William Howard Taft and General Bell on the other.

When Taft first came over at the head of a commission to determine what the U.S. should do with the Philippines, General Arthur MacArthur was military governor. They did not see eye to eye on a policy for the Philippines. General Bell sided with Taft in this controversy.

The issue was whether the Philippines should become a territory of the U.S. with Filipinos enjoying all the rights enjoyed by American citizens, or whether the Islands should be governed indefinitely as a colony of the U.S.

General Arthur MacArthur was for making the Philippines a territory; Taft and Bell were for colonization.

On this dispute, my father told Douglas:

The Taft Commission established the colonial form of government in all the 50 provinces which your father had pacified. Taft thus annulled the territorial government which your father, together with General Lawton, had started to establish.

The colonial form advocated by Taft and Bill disgusted me as well as others among us who had formed the Federal Party which had advocated the annexation of the Philippines to the U.S. since we preferred the liberal and generous system of your father to the colonial one which had brought us many evils during the time of the Spanish government and against which we rebelled.

In his memoir, my father wrote that he asked Douglas:

Could you, General, please explain why Washington seemed to have listened to General Bell more than to your father when, as a matter of fact, your father was the one most responsible for the pacification of these Islands and was best informed as to the conditions in this country?

To which Douglas replied, in a bitter tone, that Taft, "using Machiavellian tactics" and with the aid of General Bell sent "imagined information" to Washington unfavorable to the Filipinos because they wanted the Philippines to be retained indefinitely by the U.S. under a colonical government, "thus debunking the truthful information supplied earlier by my father."

My father's memoir continued, still quoting Douglas:

General Bell sided with Mr. Taft, notwithstanding his indebtedness to my father for his rapid ascent in the army, until he became chief of staff, for which reason, my father denied General Bell his friendship. General Bell later repented and even asked me to help him make up with my father.

But my father replied that he could pardon one's ingratitude, but he could never pardon General Bell for furnishing Washington with false information which made the U.S. government take measures that were harmful to the Filipino nation.

MY FATHER RECOUNTED to Douglas the part he played in General Arthur's pacification campaign.

In the first days of May, 1900, your father was ordered by Washington to take over from General Otis the post of Military Governor and Commander of all the U.S. forces in the Philippines. By this time, the American troops had occupied most of the towns and had driven the Filipino troops, including General Aguinaldo and his ministers, to the forests and mountains.

The Filipinos were forced to resort to guerrilla warfare. It was an inhuman and destructive warfare and your father wanted this brutal fighting ended as soon as possible.

Soon after he assumed his high position, your father called for me and invited me to cooperate with him in pacifying the country. He offered me a generous compensation.

I told your father that I would loyally and sincerely cooperate without benefit of compensation if he, as Military Governor, would give me an official document promising the Filipinos individual liberties and administrative powers, for which end we had shed much blood and suffered losses in life and possessions. I told your father that with such a document, I would be able honorably to face my compatriots and ask them to recognize American sovereignty in exchange for a liberal and democratic government, with provisions for independence in the future.

Your father told me he would consider my suggestion and promised a reply in a few days.

After a lapse of time during which your father undoubtedly consulted with Washington, he called for me and gave me an official document, signed by himself in his capacity as Military Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the American Forces. The document stated, among others:

That once the country was pacified, the Filipinos would enjoy all the individual liberties provided in the Malolos Constitution;

That Filipinos who had served in the revolutionary army and the civil government at Malolos shall not be barred from occupying any appointive or elective public office; and

That a fund shall be created from captured assets for the payment of pensions for Filipino widows and orphans and families of dis-

abled soldiers, said fund to be administered by General Aguinaldo or persons designated by him.

My father noted in his memoir that this document was handed to him by General Arthur MacArthur sometime in June of 1900, that he promptly had it registered in the notarial office of one Mr. Genaro Heredia. Father gave Douglas a certified copy of the document, authenticated by the director of the office, Mr. Manuel Yriarte.

My father wrote in his memoir that General Arthur won the trust of the Filipinos not only with this document but also because of the generous treatment he gave the Filipino prisoners, especially General Aguinaldo.

My father said General Aguinaldo's "prison" was "a big house on Calle Tanduay of this city, luxuriously furnished, with an office desk. He was also provided with a carriage for transportation."

"The pacification campaign did not take too long," my father wrote, "because among others General Aguinaldo was so moved by General Arthur MacArthur's magnanimous treatment that he issued a proclamation exhorting the Filipino people to accept pacification and recognize American sovereignty. In this proclamation, Aguinaldo cited the guarantee for liberalism made by General MacArthur in the document he issued to me."

My father also told Douglas that when General Arthur left towards the end of 1901, the promised pension fund had not materialized because peace had not been completely restored.

Taft's failure to set up this pension program when he took over as civil governor was among the reasons the Fili-

pinos started to lose faith in the promises of the Americans, Father noted.

"Our confidence in American promises were further weakened," my father told Douglas, "because of the conduct of Mr. Taft who, on several occasions, publicly stated that the Philippines was for the Filipinos while on the other hand telling Washington that the U.S. should retain the Philippines for at least three more generations."

My father said this act of insincerity on the part of Taft was made an issue in the election for delegates to the first National Assembly in 1907, with the result that the Nacionalista Party, with its platform for immediate independence, won overwhelmingly.

THERE WERE SO many more topics Douglas wanted to discuss with my father that they made an appointment for a second meeting. This took place on 25 January 1925, this time at the residence of my father on Azcarraga street.

They exchanged notes on historical figures, such as Bonifacio and Mabini, and about the raging controversy between President Quezon and Governor General Leonard Wood. Then they talked again about his father, General Arthur, and Governor Taft.

Father wrote in his memoir:

> General Douglas MacArthur told me about his father's ideas of bringing to the Philippines in one form or another all the liberties that are being enjoyed by Americans.
>
> He said that in spite of Governor Taft's recommendation for the U.S. to retain the Islands, President McKinley was in accord with General Arthur MacArthur's proposal for annexation because this would

give the Philippines international protection and would bring happiness to Filipinos who would then enjoy the full status of American citizenship.

Douglas told my father that President McKinley had invited his father, Arthur, to a conference on the Philippines, but unfortunately, on the day Arthur was scheduled to call on McKinley, the American President was assassinated in Buffalo.

Douglas told my father that with the tragic death of President McKinley, Mr. Taft's policy on the Philippines prevailed. For under President Theodore Roosevelt, Taft became Secretary of War, which then had jurisdiction over possessions like the Philippines. Mr. Taft's power over the Philippines became virtually absolute when he succeeded Roosevelt's as President of the U.S., Douglas told my father.

Their conversation then veered towards Secretary of State Elihu Root. My father said he admired Mr. Root because when they had a talk in Washington, Root evinced some good intentions towards the Philippines.

Whereupon, Douglas smiled and said it was true that Secretary Root was a man of great talent but he happened to know that Root was in complete agreement with Taft's policy for the indefinite retention of the Philippines.

In fact, Douglas added, many Americans considered Elihu Root too dangerous to become president because of the power of his intellect which tended to make him too autocratic.

Their second meeting ended with Douglas again saying that his father, Arthur, "looked on the Filipino nation with genuine sympathy for their welfare and not with any desire for gain."

The meeting ended on that happy note, and Douglas asked my father to keep their conversation strictly confidential.

On the basis of these revelations on General Arthur MacArthur, I believe he deserves a niche in our history as a genuine friend of the Filipino people.

I HAD OFTEN WONDERED what it was that made Governor Taft and General Bell go against General Arthur MacArthur. Now I think I know.

My guess is that from the time Taft was sent to the Philippines as head of the first civil commission, he already had his eye on the presidency of the United States. That explained his favoring the friars over the Filipino rebels in the friar land dispute. There was a sizeable bloc of Catholic voters back in the U.S. whom Taft was even then already courting.

And what's more, big American industrialists and traders were by that time beginning to ride on the colonial band wagon and Taft must have decided that these pressure lobbies must be pleased, too. After all, they were the boys who financed the Republican party campaigns.

So why should Taft listen to the Filipinos who had no vote in the U.S.? And having taken an anti-Filipino stand, Taft naturally opposed annexation as espoused by General Arthur MacArthur, for that would give the Filipinos the right to vote and their votes would hardly be for him.

As for General Bell, my guess is that he saw in Taft an up-and-coming leader and a good man to hitch his wagon to. Sure enough, as Taft moved up in Washington, Bell moved up with him.

AND NOW, BACK to my favorite hero, Douglas MacArthur.

Not being high in government, I saw the General only rarely, and then almost exclusively on a few social occasions.

He was quite fond of my brother, Philip, and his wife, Mary. When his son, Arthur, was baptized sometime in the 20s, Douglas asked Mary to be the godmother.

We had the MacArthurs for dinner at Brixton Hill one pleasant evening and we were guests at a similar occasion at their suite in the penthouse of the Manila Hotel. The MacArthurs entertained infrequently but elegantly. And only with a handful of guests at a time.

But though we were good friends — or so I thought — I never succeeded in persuading him to address the Rotary Club of Manila when I was president in 1939. He always begged off, saying his vocal chords had been affected by a neck injury sustained during his frontline duty as commander of the Rainbow Division in France. And although he was almost always a guest at Malacañang during state functions, Douglas never agreed to participate in any *rigodon de honor* which invariably opened the glittering balls in the Palace. I should know. I was a rigodon instructor in many of these Malacañang balls.

And so the great Douglas, having done his father better by rising to become chief of staff in the early 30s, (until that time he was the only Chief of Staff ever extended a second term) returned to Manila, this time with the fancy rank of Field Marshal — a rank never given to any other American, living or dead. A staunch personal friend of President Quezon, General MacArthur designed and organized the Philippine Army upon the establishment of the Commonwealth.

I RECALL DISTINCTLY one touching incident about Douglas MacArthur during the very final hours of his stay in Manila before he fled to Corregidor. I was a director of the Philippine National Bank and it was our practice to take turns working with a management committee in screening important papers, particularly requests for foreign exchange.

A fellow director, National Treasurer Salvador Lagdameo, and I were preparing to knock off for the day as it was a little past five in the afternoon when Colonel Diller, an aide to MacArthur, got through to us by telephone.

Diller was frantic. He said General MacArthur at the last minute instructed him to send all the cash in the General's account — about $75,000 in all — via telegraphic transfer to his family back in the States. Diller said MacArthur wanted us to know that he had nothing at all that he could leave to his son but this little amount, so would we please be good enough to facilitate the telegraphic transfer. But it was after office hours and both Don Salvador and I were stuck. It was not within our authority to grant the General a privilege that we would most certainly deny any ordinary customer of the bank.

But this was an extraordinary case at an extraordinary moment — the Japanese were marching down to Manila virtually unopposed — and so I decided to put in a call to Marikina where President Quezon and his retinue were in almost continuous emergency sessions.

My friend George Vargas took the call and I told him the story. In a few minutes he was back on the line. "Don Manuel says it's okay," Vargas hollered over the telephone. And that, I think, was the last telegraphic transfer to leave Manila before the fall of the the city.

Inside me, I was glad we were able to help Douglas MacArthur transmit to his son what I imagined then might well have been his last earthly possession. One always feared the possibility that a soldier like MacArthur might not return from the wars.

The rest is history. As promised, he returned at the head of the liberation forces in 1944.

DURING THE OCCUPATION, the people's regard and affection for General MacArthur found expression in many ways. I'll never forget an occasion at our evacuation house on V. Mapa street. It was January 26, 1945 — MacArthur's birthday.

Before we knew it, we had quite a crowd. There was Mr. and Mrs. Figueras and her brother Alfred Strebel who started giving us exhibition of classical dances to the accompaniment on the piano by Dr. Rivera and my wife, Lolita. There were songs and more dances by almost everyone in the crowd: Pyer Matham, Sulaf, Gonzales, James, Freddie Kauffman, Joe Meilly and my son Victor's basketball teammates.

At a time when most of Manila was in chaos, with looting rampant in the wake of the Japanese frantic preparations for a last-ditch stand, we found ways to produce some coffee, *buche, pinipig,* hot cakes and biscuits and make merry to our hearts' content.

No one ever mentioned the name of General MacArthur throughout the singing and the dancing. But all of us knew why we were celebrating.

MY ACCOUNT of Douglas as I knew him would not be complete if I did not reveal that our relationship was not all milk and honey.

One day after liberation, I was told by Don Andres Soriano that I was on the "collaborator" list of the U.S. Counter-Intelligence Corps. So I was quite prepared to be interned, like many other so-called collaborators.

Frankly, I thought, a bit naively as I now see, that General MacArthur would know me well enough to understand that what I did was in the interest of the people. In any case, when I was called in for questioning by the Counter Intelligence Corps, I told the investigators just exactly what role I played in trying to feed the civilian population as head of the NARIC. I also had a few documents to prove that some of my friends in the underground saw me regularly and that I did all that was within my power to assist them.

I was not interned. I said I was naive to suspect vaguely that my old friend Douglas might have had something to do with my being sent away scot free.

So, one day, I decided to pay my respects and to thank him. My brother Philip, who was his *compadre*, tagged along.

The aide outside his office said the General regretted that the pressure of work did not permit him the pleasure of receiving us.

I think Philip was a bit disappointed. Disgusted, in fact. But I told him I could fully understand. The General at that time was neck deep in preparation for the impending invasion of Japan and certainly his minutes were just too precious to waste on social amenities, especially on non-entities like us.

I SHARED THE GREAT admiration of our people for General MacArthur, not only as the liberator of the Philippines but also as the conqueror of Japan.

One day in September of 1945, I read in the papers that he had accepted the surrender of the proud Japanese aboard the battleship *Missouri.* It was one of the happiest moments of my life.

I was prouder yet of the General because the Japanese acknowledged him as the ruler of their Emperor. This must have confused the Japanese no end. For them the Emperor was the supreme ruler, the personification of the Omnipotent, and it must have been difficult for the Japanese to imagine where in the realm of the deity MacArthur's throne could be, being above the Japanese God-Emperor.

It's just my crazy imagination, I'm sure, but "Dugout Doug," as he was fondly called by some war correspondents I knew, must have relished being the ruler of the Emperor. How else explain what President Truman says in his memoir that at one point he had had to remind Doug that the President of the United States was the Commander-in-Chief of all the Armed Forces of the United States and not the ruler of the Emperor?

Mind you, I admire General MacArthur. In my books, he's one of the greatest generals of all times. And I was happy for him, for apparently his victorious sorties all the way to Japan had restored his speaking voice, for the newsreels carried his emotional address before the joint session of the U.S. Congress when he came back to Washington in spite of his having lost his command in Korea after Truman had pulled him back down to earth.

AND SO IT CAME to pass that the MacArthur name had become legend not only in the United States but throughout the world. Round about this time a boomlet had started in the American media to draft Douglas as the next president of the United States.

I do not know what really happened, but the fact is that Douglas MacArthur never was even nominated by either party to be candidate for the highest post in the land.

I think it's an ironic touch of history that while it fell upon old Arthur MacArthur to witness the ascendancy of his erstwhile underling, Franklin Bell, to the No. 1 army position, an erstwhile underling of Douglas, an obscure Major Dwight Eisenhower, similarly by-passed Douglas and ultimately became President of the United States.

THUS DID THE ebb and flow of fate play on the fortunes of the MacArthurs, father and son. As for me, this bedtime story of Douglas the Great had at last a happy ending.

One day, while on a tour, I learned that the General was staying at the very same hotel in New York where I had just registered. I toyed in my mind with the idea of paying my respects. But after some thought, my instinct told me I should not take a chance on once more being disappointed.

When, finally, General MacArthur made his last visit to the Philippines in 1961, I thought it my duty to join the millions of my fellow countrymen in doing honor to this great man, especially as by this time he was getting on in years and there were broad hints in the media that this might be — as indeed it turned out to be — his last senti-

mental visit to this country, which he liked to call his second home.

And so there I was, one of the thousands who flocked at the airport that muggy day to bid him welcome. I had no protocol rank and was therefore deep behind the line, among the many obscure bystanders, but to my great surprise the General recognized me, said hello, and inquired how my brother Philip, his *compadre*, was.

As the Good Book has said, there's a time for everything and this was a time for General Douglas MacArthur to relive his good old days in Manila and to renew old friendships. I was near tears with emotion, mostly because I was remorseful for even having suspected that power and fame had gone into Douglas MacArthur's head and that he had forgotten his little friends here. How wrong I was!

That was the last time I saw General MacArthur. I was happy he was accorded one of the greatest receptions seen in this country. And happier still that when he finally passed away, the whole world mourned for him. Inside me, I was happy that in all the accounts of his colorful life, MacArthur's stint in the Philippines was always mentioned as among the highlights of his storybook career.

It makes me feel good that I am now able to tell my grandchildren a little bedtime story about Douglas MacArthur just as my father before me had his own bedtime story he told Douglas about his father, Arthur.

21

MEET DR. SCHURMAN OF CORNELL

The head of the first Civil Commission was for Philippine independence all along.

JACOB GOULD SCHURMAN was a very happy man when he made a sentimental journey to the Philippines in 1933. He had many good reasons to be happy.

Thirty-five years earlier, Dr. Schurman came to the Philippines as president of the first Philippine Commission. He had been asked by President William McKinley to take a year's leave from his job as president of Cornell University so he could take a good look and advise the White House and the U.S. Congress on what to do with the Philippines.

The story of his involvement in the Philippines and what had happened here between his stint in 1899 and his sentimental trip 35 years later is a success story that, I believe, sums up the whole role that my generation played in the building of this nation.

Thanks to Dr. Schurman's recollections, I was able to gather in one bound scrapbook some records that give insights into the forces at work when the United States ventured forth

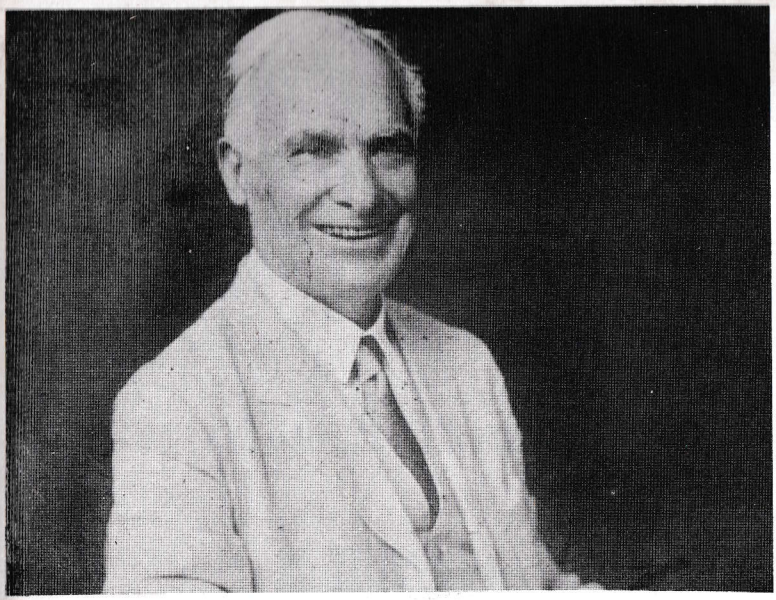
into the Philippines. I think that what Dr. Schurman had to say during his visit is worth recording in these memoirs both as Filipiniana and Americaniana.

I had a choice ringside seat at Dr. Schurman's show because it fell upon me to serve as his aide, tourist guide and general factotum throughout his 16-day visit. The Cornell University Alumni Association of the Philippines had volunteered to take Dr. Schurman in town and somehow I was named official host in my capacity as "lifetime" secretary-treasurer of that alumni group.

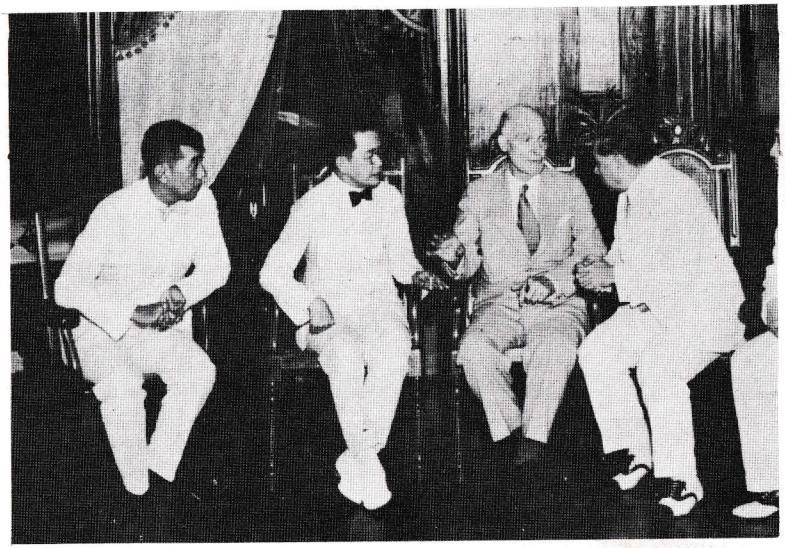
So I was at the pier, along with Senator Sergio Osmeña, to welcome Dr. Schurman and his grandson, Jacob the third, when the illustrous president emeritus of Cornell and former U.S. envoy to China and Germany arrived on board the *Hoover* on 2 November 1933.

I was there when Dr. Schurman made two important speeches: one during a banquet in his honor given by Senate President Quezon at the Manila Hotel and again when he addressed the House of Representatives the morning of 7 November. I also served as interpreter when Schurman called on General Aguinaldo in Kawit. He was honored at a convocation at the University of the Philippines, was "roasted" by Manila newspapermen at a "gridiron" dinner and, of course, was entertained by the Cornell Alumni at a banquet at Wack Wack.

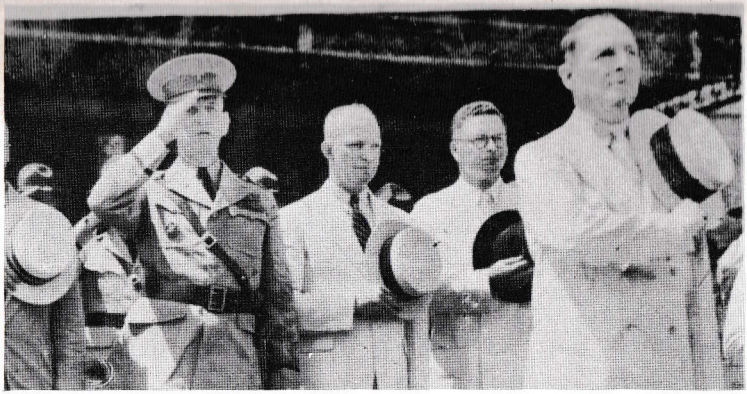
AS I NOW PIECE his stories together on these different occasions, Dr. Schurman emerges as one of the earliest champions of the Filipino cause and one of the architects of America's enlightened policy in the Philippines.



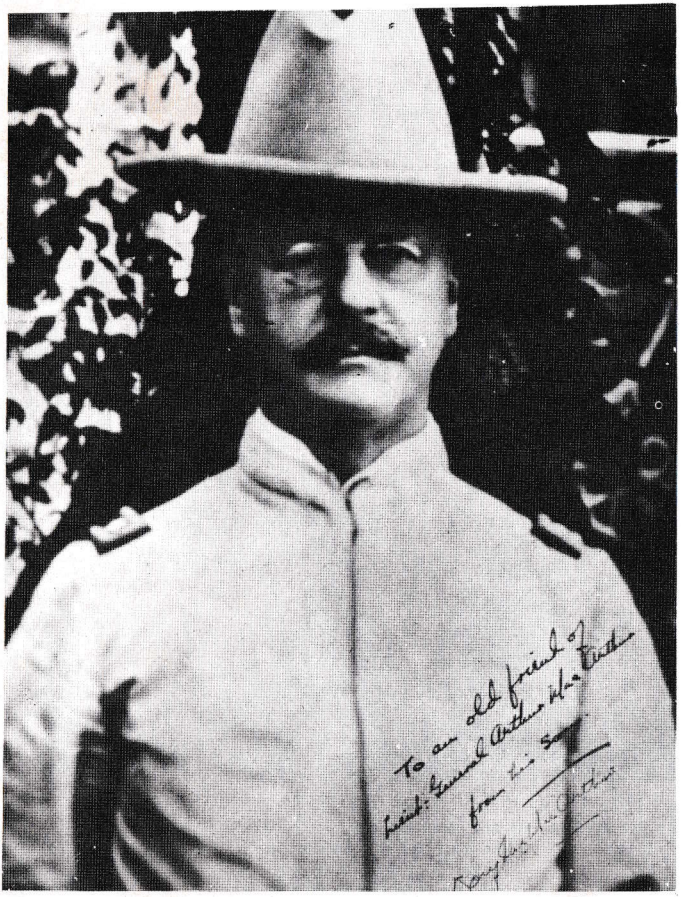
Dr. Jacob Schurman, president emeritus of Cornell University and President of the First Philippine Commission in 1899, gave me this portrait after his sentimental trip to the Philippines in 1933 when I served as his official escort. A staunch friend of the Philippines, he never wavered in 35 years from his espousal of independence for the Filipino people.



I served as interpreter during Dr. Schurman's visit with General Aguinaldo in Kawit. At right is Mr. Escamilla, Aguinaldo's private secretary and interpreter who was a member of the Philippine delegation to the 1903 St. Louis Exposition.



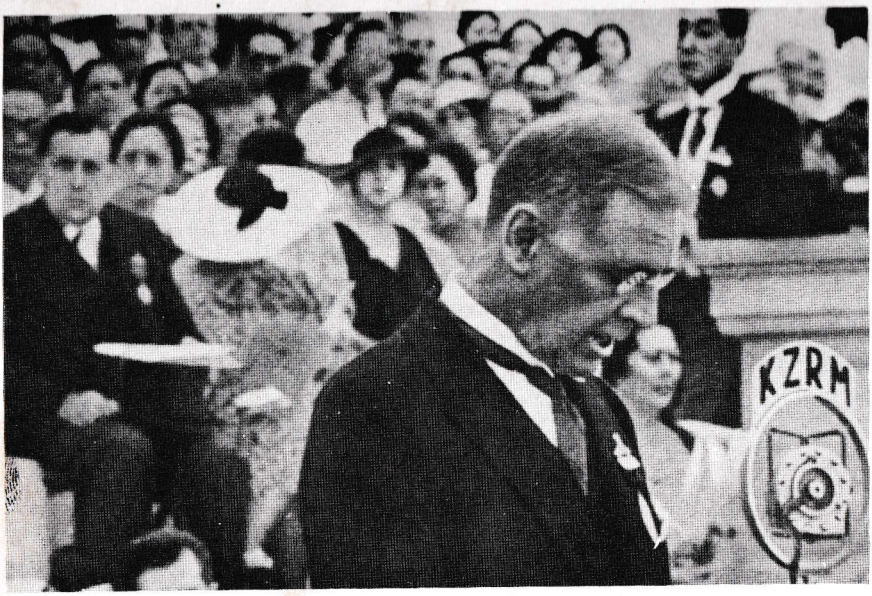
General Douglas MacArthur arrives as special guest during the inauguration of the Comomnwealth in 1935. Behind him is his staff notably his then obscure assistant, Major Eisenhower, third from right, who in 1953 became the 34th President of the United States.



Lieut. Gen. Arthur MacArthur, father of Douglas, was one of the best friends of the Philippines. Note dedication by Douglas who gave the photograph to my father.

State functions in Malacañang almost always featured a *Rigodon de Honor*. This affair given by Governor General Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., in 1932, shows my wife, Lolita, at left, Baby Quezon and her partner, Speaker Jose Yulo and Mrs. Carmen Vasquez and her partner, Senator Pedro Hernaez.

Major attraction during Carnivals in the 30's were the *Comparsa* dances presented by the socialites of the day. This *Comparsa* simulated cooks and waitresses during the 1933 carnival.



During the inauguration of the Commonwealth on 15 November 1935, I stood where I could look after the comfort of the state guests. I was head of the subcommittee in charge of hospitality. Action photo was taken while War Secretary George H. Dern was proclaiming the start of the Commonwealth. That was I to his right behind him.

President Quezon ordered all members of the Cabinet to wear formal cut-away for the Commonwealth inauguration ceremonies in 1935. I was only an under-secretary but Quezon asked me to wear one, anyway.

Dr. Schurman said he was at first reluctant to accept President McKinley's offer for him to head the first Philippine Commission, but he finally relented after the American President agreed to give him *carte blanche* on how to go about his mission.

"I accepted President McKinley's offer after he had assured me that he agreed with me that the U.S. should not retain the Philippines," Schurman told a *Tribune* reporter in an interview.

Schurman quoted McKinley as saying: "I agree with you: we should not retain the Islands. But you know how conditions are in that country; we have destroyed Spanish sovereignty there and it is now up to us to guide the destiny of its people and improve their conditions."

And so Dr. Schurman came over in 1899 on a slow boat. As it turned out, if plane travel had been available then, the course of history might have been different.

It seems that while Schurman was en route, a shooting war had started between Filipino and American troops. When he finally landed in Manila on 4 March 1899, he felt frustrated. He had hoped to work out a formula for peaceful cooperation between the two peoples until the country was prepared for autonomy.

But with the start of the shooting war, bad blood had developed on both sides. General E. S. Otis, commander of the American troops, was determined to quell the insurrection by force. Schurman proposed that the Commission make one more try at peaceful negotiations but he was outvoted.

Dejected, Schurman made one last try. He sent a confidential cablegram to the secretary of war in Washington urging a peaceful negotiation with General Aguinaldo

for the "adjustment of U.S. sovereignty and responsibility with the reasonable aspirations of the Filipinos to govern themselves."

But feeling had run high in the U.S. with each report of clashes and casualties and the War Department opted for a military solution.

When Schurman visited with Aguinaldo in Kawit on 16 November 1933, the visitor told the General:

> I have always wanted to tell you, General, that if hostilities between the American and Filipino forces had not broken out while I was on my way from the United States, you and I might have been able to settle the Philippine question peacefully.

The General agreed.

Schurman recalled that according to a confidential report he received, General Aguinaldo had directed a team from his staff to contact Schurman for exploratory talks but that General Antonio Luna, considered among the hawks, blocked this team from proceeding with that mission.

Schurman said he felt helpless under the circumstances and he decided to cut short his stay here. But he said he was able to insert two of his pet ideas in the report of the first Commission to Congress: the immediate establishment of public schools for free, popular education; and the establishment of local, provincial and national governments manned entirely by Filipinos. He had predicted that within a generation or about 30 years, the Filipinos would be ready for complete independence.

IN HIS ADDRESS BEFORE the House, Dr. Schurman recalled that he had occasion to discuss with policy makers in

Washington four options on the form of government for the Philippines:

First, the establishment of a "crown colony" type of government similar to the relationship of Canada with Great Britain. This was rejected outright because of the monarchical connotation of the idea.

The second proposal was a "commonwealth" system whereby the Philippines would enjoy full autonomy while remaining under American protection. This was rejected, too, because it could plunge the U.S. into conflicts with foreign powers over matters not of its own choosing.

The third proposal was to annex the Philippines as a territory of the U.S. This was turned down also because the U.S. authorities felt that the Constitution of the U.S. was adopted for the American people and to apply that Constitution to the Philippines would create too many difficulties.

On the fourth proposal, here is what Dr. Schurman told our legislators, as published in the *Tribune* of 8 November 1933:

"There remained a fourth possibility which it seemed to us was the only feasible one. That was independence. I regarded it as the only feasible one because it and it alone was the solution which the Philippine people want. From 1899 to this day, what they covet was absolute independence. And I reported, Mr. Speaker, in the political section of our report to the President and Congress of the United States in 1899, that it would be misleading if we did not inform the President and Congress that all Filipinos, including the Filipinos who in 1899 were cooperating with us Americans that all Filipinos looked forward and demanded eventual independence for the Archipelago. (Applause)

"That is the report I gave and I recommended just as soon as I resigned under the Commission, and to speak frankly, I recommended that as soon as possible independence be given and from that day to this day, I have always said that the establishment of the public schools,

which I recommended in my report, should be started at once, and the practice of home rule beginning from the municipality and extended to the provinces and, finally, in the whole Archipelago, which we also recommended, should be put into effect at once; that if these two measures will be put into operation, I always believe that in one generation the Filipinos would be ready for independence and that the time the Filipinos are ready it was the duty of Congress to give it to them. (Applause)

"We regard a generation as a third of a century, say, thirty-three years. It was just thirty-four years since I was here, and my latest views on the subject are embodied in an address I gave before the Catholic University at Washington on December 12, 1932. On January 3rd, last, that speech was published in the Congressional Record, a copy of which I have now before me. In the last portion, in the closing words of that speech, assuming as I assumed then, and assuming as I assume now, that the Filipinos will get their independence, I also assume that some form will be devised by American statesmen and Filipino statesmen for the granting of that independence which will be satisfactory to both peoples. Assuming that, then I said:

"I venture to express the hope that in our last official dealings with our Philippine wards (dealings regarding independence) we shall treat them not only with consideration but with generosity. In all cases of doubt let the decision go in favor of the weaker and poorer people. Magnanimity is often a better policy than sharp bargaining. In a great republic, narrow minds and small hearts go ill together. I want the future sovereign and independent Philippine nation to think well of America and to cherish for us genuine esteem and appreciation. I covet their good opinion for my country. I hope they will report us well in Asia . . . ."

"And the hour has struck!" Schurman declared triumphantly.

At the time of his address, the U.S. Congress had passed the Hare-Hawes-Cutting Law granting independence after a 10-year transition period, but, as you will recall, President Quezon had persuaded our legislature to reject it in

favor of better terms. That week of Schurman's visit, President Quezon was scheduled to leave for Washington to ask for a better law. Schurman said he was certain that Quezon would succeed. (And he did.)

LATER THAT WEEK, Dr. Schurman was in an expansive mood when he dined with us Cornell alumni at Wack Wack. What he dreamed for the Philippines in 1899 has been more than achieved, he told us. Filipinos were now virtually in full control of all levels of government and the mass education program was a big success.

He said he was particularly proud of the important role that Cornelians were playing in the development of the country. He noted that almost all the 139 Cornell alumni in the Philippines, both Americans and Filipinos, were in high positions of leadership and responsibility.

A supplement published by the *Herald* on 4 November 1933 on the occasion of Dr. Schurman's visit had a banner headline: "Cornell University Can Be Proud of Alumni in the Philippines."

The story mentioned the names of Jose Paez, manager of the railroad; Dr. Francisco Fronda, U.P. professor who published books on poultry raising; Irrigation Engineer Emilio Quisumbing; Assistant City Engineer Jose Garrido; Atty. Antonio C. Torres, member of the Manila Municipal board; Engineer H. B. Reyes; Judge Pedro Tuason; and Tomas Mapua who had founded the Mapua Institute of Technology.

It also mentioned my name as the first vet in this country.

To this list of pioneers, I must add Don Ambrosio Magsaysay, first Filipino manager of the Metropolitan Water Dis-

trict; Carlos Locsin, an agriculturist; and Francisco Ycasiano, a mechanical engineer then with the Manila Railroad. Since then, Filipino Cornelians have proudly carried on, particularly in the field of science and technology.

The list of American alumni then working in Manila was imposing: Prof. Austin Craig, noted Rizal scholar; James Rockwell, John F. Cotton and Joseph A. Thomas, all then of the Meralco; Sam Garmezy of Atlantic Gulf; and several others in business and industry.

Dr. Schurman was nearing 80 when he visited us in 1933. He was 45 when he first came to the Philippines. Throughout the intervening 35 years he never wavered in his belief that the Filipino people deserved what they wanted most: complete political independence.

I think Dr. Schurman deserves a more prominent niche in Philippine history than he is now accorded by our historians.

He was a very appreciative man. Before leaving Manila to continue his round-the-world tour, he gave me a portrait of himself. "With much appreciation of his courteous attention and unfailing practical helpfulness . . ." says his dedication.

I, for one, think well of Americans in general. And one big reason I think that highly of Americans is Jacob Gould Schurman, a true friend of our people.

22

A MOMENT OF FULFILLMENT

Quezon's obsession was to prove that the little man can achieve happiness in a democracy.

NEVER WAS I so terribly embarrassed. There I was, hosting a luncheon at Brixton Hill for a Japanese prince (whose name I cannot now recall) and in the middle of the meal I actually dozed off. When I awoke, I apologized. The prince understood.

The prince had come to Manila as one of the official representatives of the Japanese Emperor to the ceremonies inaugurating President Manuel L. Quezon as first President of the Commonwealth of the Philippines. It was my assignment to entertain the prince at my Brixton Hill home this luncheon hour of inauguration day, 15 November 1935. We minor officials had a free period because the scheduled activity at that precise hour was limited to an official call on the new President by the top officials of the newly-inaugurated Commonwealth government. Other foreign guests were farmed out among various government officials. The idea was to let the foreign guests have an idea of what Filipino homes looked like.

I explained to the prince why I was dead tired. I showed him the listing in the official program; I was chairman of the sub-committee on government guests. I had been working to the bone since the arrival on 8 November of a delegation from the U.S. Congress who had been invited as guests of the State to witness the inauguration ceremonies.

IT WAS MY JOB to take care of the delegation from the very moment they arrived on board the liner *President Grant*. I had to look after their luggages, see that they were given due courtesies of the port, arranged for their transportation to the Manila Hotel and, finally, re-check to make sure there was no hitch in the assignment of rooms. It was my job to see that they were present and on time at official functions. It was my job to plan and conduct excursions for these guests to interesting places to make sure they did not have a dull moment throughout their stay. And it was my job to coordinate the socials and other entertainments.

I'm afraid we overwhelmed them with too much hospitality. There were luncheons, teas and dinners every day of their stay. In between, there were military and civic parades, receptions and balls, concerts and sight-seeing. There were excursions to Baguio, Pagsanjan and Corregidor and a cruise to the southern islands. We gave them the works.

We wanted to give them the best because the delegation from the United States was tops. President Roosevelt sent as his personal representative the Secretary of War, Mr. George H. Dern, the highest official that had to do with the administration of the Philippines. The Bureau of Insular

Affairs, which had direct jurisdiction over this country, was under the War Department.

The delegation from the U.S. Congress was super-duper. It was headed by Vice President John N. Garner on the part of the Senate and by Speaker Joseph W. Byrnes of the House. With them were 17 senators and 26 congressmen, mostly members of the Senate and House committees that had to do with Philippine matters.

Never before or since had any congressional group of such stature and number gone as one delegation to any foreign country.

I think it was a measure of President Quezon's prestige and popularity in the U.S. Congress that such a delegation agreed to make the trip in spite of the time involved. The boat trip took at least eight weeks back and forth, plus another two-week stay in the Philippines. That was too much time for a junket, even for legislators.

Most of the senators and congressmen were personal friends of Don Manuel. He knew a number of them from way back when he was resident commissioner in Washington and he had met many others during his periodic independence missions to the U.S.

IN THE WORK of getting the big wheels of the U.S. Congress lined up to come to Manila for the inauguration, Quezon was aided by a first-rate contact man: former Senator Harry B. Hawes.

Hawes, as you will recall, was one of the authors of the Hare-Hawes-Cutting bill. When his term expired, he set up a law office in Washington and he was engaged as

consultant by the Philippine Sugar Producers Association primarily to help protect Philippine sugar from adverse legislation. In those days sugar quotas were determined from year to year by Congress.

As early as June 1935, Under-Secretary Jorge B. Vargas, who had been on detail as general factotum to Senate President Quezon, had been shoving on to me most of the correspondences from Hawes on the organization of the delegation because George, who almost always called on me to entertain foreign visitors, already had tagged me to head the hospitality committee for the inauguration.

I gathered from Hawes' letters that his job was not easy. After he had succeeded in getting Vice President Garner and Speaker Byrnes to accept the invitation, he was flooded with calls from a number of other senators and congressmen. They all wanted to go.

In his letter to President Quezon, Hawes requested that a definite line be drawn, namely, that only members of the Insular and Territories Affairs committees of the Senate and of the Foreign Relations and Insular Affairs committees of the House be invited. Otherwise, he said, those left out will be offended.

This posed a problem because President Quezon had a number of personal friends he wanted included although they were not members of the committees concerned. Hawes neatly solved this touchy problem by listing Quezon's personal friends as substitutes for the few committee members who could not make the trip.

Another problem was protocol. It seemed that many Washington socials had become fiascoes because the hosts violated certain rules of protocol. Hawes also solved this

problem by asking the protocol officer of the State Department to prepare a protocol list of those making the trip to Manila. In a cablegram to President Quezon, Hawes emphasized that on all occasions, the State Department listing, which he gave in full in that cablegram, should be strictly followed.

In one of his letters to President Quezon, Senator Hawes gave the in-coming president some ammunition just in case critics questioned the prudence of spending so much money on a junket by such an overly large group of foreign visitors.

Hawes pointed out that the future of the Philippines depended heavily on her economic stability and this, in turn, depended on how much concession the Philippines could wangle out from Congress for such major exports as sugar, coconut products and abaca fibers.

Moreover, said Hawes, the large delegation of American legislators will impress upon foreign countries that the U.S. Government was giving much importance to the Philippines. Japan cannot fail to notice this, Hawes said, and if the Japanese happened to be thinking of invading the Philippines, they will be deterred by their knowledge that the U.S. cares a great deal about the Philippines.

(A fine psy-war move, I must agree. Only as events later proved, the Japanese not only ignored the presence here of the U.S. armed forces; they even struck deep into American territory at Honolulu.)

MY SUB-COMMITTEE was organized about the middle of September so we had two months to prepare. I was au-

thorized to name my members. I had a definite purpose in mind in selecting my members.

For example, I asked Secretary Rafael Alunan to join because he knew most of the visitors, having often accompanied Mr. Quezon to Washington. I asked Mr. Joseph E. H. Stevenot to join because he had excellent contacts with the American business community and I wanted him to arrange for the entertainment of the guests during the trip to Baguio, with mining executives serving as hosts. Howard M. Cavender of the Dollar Steamship Lines was handy in working out details of the boat trip of the visitors. Dean Francisco Benitez arranged for the Pagsanjan excursion. Dr. Salvador Araneta was in because he had offered to host a big reception and ball at his suburban show place, the Victoneta.

Marcial P. Lichauco, a lawyer who had served with the Philippine office in Washington, made the mistake of inquiring how he could secure a pass so he could attend the inauguration ceremonies. Well, he had to work for his pass. We named him secretary of the committee. He did a good job, too, because he knew quite a number of the visitors from Washington.

At the beginning I lined up a number of bureau directors and other ranking people under them to serve as tour guides and travelling companions for the visitors. But along came President Jorge Bocobo of the University of the Philippines with a bright idea. Why not tap his faculty at the university for this work? Why not, indeed? They were particularly handy because most of them had studied in the United States and I figured they would make intelligent companions for the visitors.

By the way, the professors who played tourist guides at that time had gone on to become big names in the field of education. They included Professors Enrique Virata, Isidoro Panlasigui, Dr. Herminio Velarde, Solomon Arnaldo, Tomas Fonacier and Cecilio Lopez. Among the bureau heads who also served as tourist guides were Florencio Tamesis, Hilarion Silayan and Dr. Eduardo Quisumbing.

I was surprised to see in my list of tourist guides one Gil Puyat who was neither from the bureaus nor from the university. He was listed merely as coming from Puyat & Sons. He must have been one of those exceptional volunteers who were taken in because they were bright. Which showed he could break most any barrier, even then.

I have in my file handwritten daily reports of most of these guides. I had asked them to write these reports as means of my checking on their work. I find these reports revealing of what was in the mind of the visitors. In majority of cases where conversations took place between the congressional visitor and the guides, the Americans showed concern over the defense of the Philippines from possible invasion by Japan when complete independence comes ten years hence. As events turned out, they were dead right about a Japanese invasion, only the Japanese beat the gun and started firing even while the U.S. military was still very much around.

Another curious detail: in his circular to the visitors, the commanding general, Harbor Defenses of Manila and Subic Bays, reminded the American legislators that it was against regulations to bring cameras to Ft. Mills, on Corregidor. I do not know if any of the visitors took offense for being so distrusted by their own brass. But I do know that when the rule against cameras was made, the guns on Corregidor were all facing west, ready to thwart any invasion

by warships from the sea. As you know, these cannons were never used. The new technology of warfare had made the ban against cameras pointless.

MY WORKHORSE in the committee was a then obscure administrative assistant from the Department of Agriculture: Felino Neri (who later became acting secretary of foreign affairs and ambassador to Japan). It was Felino's main job to put together all the information that must go into a printed schedule of events. With the inevitable last-minute changes in details and schedules, poor Felino had to run back and forth the last four days between various committee offices and the printer. But he did get the program out just before deadline.

I remember Felino because at the end of the assignment, he submitted an expense account covering taxi fares, meals and sundry expenses over a period of three weeks. His total claim was a staggering sum of twenty pesos, Philippine currency, with almost every item covered with a receipt! Felino was typical of the prewar public servant — hardworking and honest.

I am amused everytime I thumb through my file on this inauguration bash. The caterer charged ₱2 for a three-course luncheon at Pagsanjan. The boatman wanted ₱4 for shooting the rapids. We provided the visitors with wide-brimmed straw hats each costing 40 centavos. For those who did not come in rubber shoes, we provided *alparagatas*, a native casual slipper made of fibers. That cost another 40 centavos. We sure had high respect for the centavo then!

I was careful with expenses because our claims were subject to accounting by an American auditor general. I re-

called that Mr. Quezon and other Filipino officials had had a rough time dealing with American auditors.

I must say, though, that Mr. J. Weldon Jones, the incumbent auditor general when the inauguration was held, was a decent man. He knew how much the shindig meant to President Quezon and his people. And of course, he knew that Governor General Frank Murphy was very sympathetic. But he had to go by the rules, so when we submitted our vouchers, he sent back a memo or two disallowing a few little items that, he said, did not conform to standard auditing requirements. But, with his first rejection memo, he clipped a personal handwritten note addressed to me saying in effect I should not worry because at heart he felt every centavo we were spending for the inauguration was a sound investment in winning goodwill for the Philippines abroad; that in the end, all legitimate expenses would be passed in audit.

IN ADDITION TO THE big delegation from Congress, the top people in the American press were on hand. There was Roy Howard of the Scripps-Howard chain and one of the closest friends of President Quezon. There was Dean W. Ackerman of the Columbia School of Journalism, and the grand old man of American grass roots journalism, William Allen White. There was Erwin D. Canham of the *Christian Science Monitor* and some 20 other topnotch Washington journalists.

There were a few sentimental guests: former Governor General Francis Burton Harrison, considered one of the most friendly governors of them all, and old General Frank Mc-

Intyre who for many years administered the Philippines from his desk as head of the Bureau of Insular Affairs.

But one of the most distinguished official guests was the head of the U.S. Military Mission, General Douglas MacArthur. He had come with the understanding he would stay over to serve as advisor to Quezon in organizing a defense establishment. On his staff were three officers: Major J. B. Ord, Major Howard Hutter and, at the bottom of the list, the most junior officer, an obscure major named Dwight D. Eisenhower!

AND SO THE BIG DAY CAME. On instructions from President Quezon, all members of the Cabinet wore formal cutaway with top hat. I was only an acting under-secretary but President Quezon ordered me to wear this formal attire, regardless. I took my place early on the corner of the second bank of stairs of the Legislative building. From my post, I could see the whole front layout and the foreign guests could see me, too. The idea was for these guests to signal to me in case anything was amiss. Nobody gave me any high sign throughout the ceremony, but I could see in their faces and the way they fanned themselves that most of the visitors found the humidity a bit uncomfortable.

Promptly at 7:10 the morning of November 15, a limousine bearing Governor Murphy and Secretary Dern left Malacañang, escorted by a contingent of cavalry. At the same time, another limousine with a similar escort left the Roberts street mansion of President Quezon bearing the President-elect and his family.

They assembled, along with top people on the protocol list, through the back door of the Legislative building and

were herded into the various offices and the session hall where they were lined up in the order of their rank for the processional march to the grandstand.

Promptly at 7:45 there were bugle calls. Silence fell on an assemblage of some 300,000 people, the largest ever. A baritone voice boomed over the loud-speaker, announcing the grand entry of the VIPs in the ascending order of protocol:

The American vice-governor and members of the Cabinet

The associate justices of the Supreme Court

The members of the House of Representatives

The members of the Philippine Senate

The members-elect of the National Assembly

The commander-in-chief of the U.S. Naval Forces in Philippine Waters, and the commanding general of the Philippine Department, U.S. Army.

The visiting members of the U.S. House of Representatives

The visiting members of the U.S. Senate

The vice-president of the U.S. and the speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives.

The speaker of the Philippine House of Representatives, the chief justice of the Supreme Court and the vice-president-elect of the Philippines.

The governor general and the president-elect

The U.S. secretary of war.

I had been curious about this ranking. I could not understand why Secretary Dern, an appointive member of the U.S. Cabinet, was rated above the Vice-President of the U.S. The explanation: Dern was here not as a Cabinet man

but as the personification of President Roosevelt. Everything he did, everything he said had the full force and effect as if the President of the United States himself was on hand.

Another curious thing: the high protocol rank of the commanders of the U.S. army and navy. This had been an established tradition since the American occupation and was to remain so until independence in 1946. From then on the presence of uniformed officers in state affairs was reduced to those who served as aides-de-camp. It is perhaps one of the strengths of Philippine democracy that the military has respected civilian supremacy. That is why we do not have coups of the kind that occur quite often in Latin American countries.

The ceremonies opened with a solemn invocation by His Grace, the Most Reverend Gabriel M. Reyes, D.D., Archbishop of Cebu. He was the ranking Filipino Catholic prelate, the Archbishop of Manila, His Grace, Michael J. O'Doherty, being a foreigner. It was a nationalistic touch.

Governor General Frank Murphy then introduced Secretary of War Dern who read a prepared address. He drew a big applause when he said:

President Roosevelt asked me to say that his heart is with you on this historic day.

Then he read a radiogram which he said he had just received from President Roosevelt. It was the American President's message to the Filipino people.

The radiogram said:

Please convey to President Quezon and the Filipino people on the occasion of the birth of the Commonwealth of the Philippines my sincere congratulations on this great forward step on the establishment of popular self-government, and express to them my confidence in their

ability to carry out successfully the final steps in the accomplishment of their complete independence.

A more thunderous applause.

After reviewing what he said was a consistent policy of the United States to respect "the fundamental right of peoples to govern themselves," Dern concluded by saying: "We hope the world will say of us that our work here has been well done."

Governor Murphy followed Dern on the rostrum and read a proclamation by President Roosevelt dated 14 November 1935 announcing that an election was held on 17 September 1935 for the purpose of electing the officers of the Commonwealth, that the results of said election have been certified to President Roosevelt by the governor general.

Now, therefore, I, Franklin D. Roosevelt, President of the United States of America . . . do announce and proclaim that this proclamation shall be effective upon its promulgation on November 15, 1935 by the Secretary of War of the United States of America, who is hereby designated as my representative for that purpose . . .

AND NOW FOR THE climactic moment. Everybody in the assemblage stood up as President Quezon rose and walked slowly toward the rostrum. He looked smart in his cutaway, embellished with a sash and a couple of foreign decorations. He faced Chief Justice Ramon Avanceña. Both raised their right hands and Quezon repeated the oath of office as the chief justice read it before him.

Hardly had Quezon's last words echoed from the old walls across the field when the ruffles of drums and the flourishes of trumpets filled the air. From a distance, big guns boomed a salute announcing that the first President of the Common-

wealth of the Philippines had been installed. In a moment, the Constabulary band broke forth with the Philippine National Anthem. I was filled with emotion. I could not hold back my tears. It was as though we had finally reached some kind of a glorious pinnacle. It was a moment of supreme fulfillment:

After his oath-taking, the high point of the ceremonies, of course, was the inaugural address of President Quezon. I have always admired the way he would keep his audience totally spellbound. He had always been inspiring, often fiery.

But I thought in this, his first public address as President of the Commonwealth, he sounded a bit restrained. He sounded as though he fully realized the grave responsibility that has fallen upon his shoulders as leader of a people in the final stage of transition towards full independence.

"Under the Commonwealth," Quezon declared, "our life may not be one of ease and comfort, but rather of hardship and sacrifice . . . We shall build a government that will be just, honest, efficient and strong so that the foundations of the coming republic may be firm and enduring . . ."

The dark international situation was uppermost on his mind. "We are living today," he said, "amidst the storm and stress of one of the most tragic epochs of history. Acute unemployment and economic distress threaten the stability of governments the world over. The very foundations of civilized society are shaken."

I have read and reread the published text of President Quezon's address and the more I read it the more I am impressed by his concern for the masses. "The common man alone can save humanity from disaster. It is our duty to

prove to him that under a republican system of government he can have every opportunity to attain his happiness and that of his family . . ."

And then his final appeal:

> In the enormous task of fully preparing ourselves for independence we shall be beset with serious difficulties, but we will resolutely march forward. I appeal to your patriotism and summon your nobility of heart so that we may, united in the common endeavor, once more dedicate ourselves to the realization of our national destiny . . .

AFTER QUEZON'S ADDRESS, Chief Justice Avanceña administered similar oaths to Vice-President Sergio Osmeña and then to the newly-elected members of the National Assembly.

And just to make it official, Secretary Dern, speaking for President Roosevelt, proclaimed the existence of the government of the Commonwealth of the Philippines at 8:58 a.m.

After a brief recessional, President Quezon and his family returned to the center of the grandstand, now provided with a rigged-up awning, to review a military and civic parade in his honor. After the parade, he was escorted to Malacañang. At the gate, his cavalry escort was relieved by a corps of Malacañang guards. And then for another climactic moment: the first President of the Philippines ascended the stairs of Malacañang — the very first Filipino ever to govern from that historic palace!

But this I must say of President Quezon: During the first week, he stayed in Malacañang only for official ceremonial functions. All the entertaining given by him for the visiting dignitaries were held at his private residence on

Roberts street in Pasay. It took some time before the Quezons finally moved into the Palace. Many discerning people noticed this act of delicate restraint.

That evening, an inaugural ball was held at the auditorium of the carnival grounds. It was a gala affair, with only the more or less affluent in attendance. The catch: they had to pay for their tickets at ₱100 apiece and the proceeds went to charity.

That weekend, a popular banquet was held at the same auditorium in honor of President Quezon. This time, representative elements of the community, notably the labor groups, were in attendance.

It took another five days of touring and partying and speech-making before the congressional visitors finally departed on the liner *President Jefferson.*

Only then was I able to catch my breath. By this time, I was really all in. I don't know how many pounds I lost.

What little work I did seemed to have been appreciated. The *Philippines Free Press,* for one, praised Secretary Jorge B. Vargas for doing a splendid job as overall major-domo of the entire super-production. Towards the end of the editorial, the *Free Press* said:

> Besides Secretary Vargas, Undersecretary Victor Buencamino also deserved praise for the manner in which he took care of the distinguished visitors during their stay in the Philippines. Few of them will ever forget his constant readiness to help them in every possible way. It is such things which give visitors a lasting impression of their hosts.

I felt better after reading this editorial. I do not recall ever again falling asleep while hosting a luncheon at home or anywhere else. Never did I work to exhaustion again.

23

AS I KNEW QUEZON, THE MAN

You knew when you had arrived; Don Manuel gave you his hideout key.

I HAVE FOUND it difficult to make my friends believe that I was not as intimately close to President Quezon as they imagined. Don Manuel was some 10 years my senior and I think he kind of looked down on my like. I was a kid brother. My brother Philip, being older and also a politician, was much closer to him than I ever was. I often heard them talk about their escapades. Only very rarely was I ever asked to join them in their sallies.

One such occasion, I remember well. When he wanted to move around incognito, Don Manuel himself drove an unpretentious Ford. This particular evening we hopped aboard his Ford and went to the San Juan cabaret, quite a popular watering place for gay blades in those days of of the early 20s.

The No. 1 belle of the place was a stunning looker named Paquita. It was only natural that Don Manuel should rivet his attention on her. My impression was that the then president of the Senate of the Philippines and already No. 1

political leader was falling real hard for beauteous Paquita and this rather bothered me. So I upped and told him what was on my mind.

"Don Manuel," I said, "I hope you will forgive me, but it is my honest view that it is below the dignity of a man of your stature to show more than diverting interest in a bailarina."

I had expected him to blow up. As a young upstart I had no business admonishing him. But, surprisingly, he was in a good mood. He seemed always to be in a jolly mood everytime he held and beheld Paquita.

"Listen to me, Victor," Don Manuel replied. "You know I'm having a running debate in the Senate with Don Juan Sumulong. I'm under great tension. But I notice that everytime I come here and dance with Paquita I get a big lift. I relax. And tomorrow I'll be nice and fresh again when I resume my polemics with Don Juan."

That was Don Manuel for you. Even his womanizing he justified as something in the public interest.

I HAVE EARLIER recounted how Don Manuel got attracted to one of my girl friends whom we called Cristina and how he very considerately asked me if I was serious about the girl. The net effect of his question was that I had to withdraw from competition, knowing I did not have a ghost of a chance with him as rival.

Paquita was but one of Don Manuel's many inspirations. It was legendary that he was well-nigh irresistible. Whether in politics or in romance, he pursued his quarry with ardor and persistence.

But what few people knew was that Don Manuel's batting average as lover boy was not quite 100 per cent. I knew of at least one instance where he struck out. He was just a budding assemblyman then and relatively unknown when he went after one who was regarded as the Number One Belle of all Manila. She was the daughter of one of the most wealthy Filipinos at the time. She was young, accomplished and ravishingly beautiful.

Don Manuel went after her with the ferocity of a lion, but, perhaps for the first time in his romantic life, the young Quezon got nowhere. She married another dashing young man from a prominent family in the South.

Don Manuel enjoyed the company of people who were witty. Among his closest cronies were Benito Razon, Assemblyman Tommy Oppus and Buenaventura Barona. "Tura" was an elder brother to the famous labor leader, Francisco Varona. (The brothers spelled the first letter of their family name differently.) Anyway, Tura, Benito and Oppus were great court jesters all and they amused President Quezon no end.

Don Manuel's cronies knew when they had arrived; he gave them keys to a little hideaway on Cuneta street in Pasay. It was a cute, elaborately furnished little bungalow where Don Manuel and his cronies entertained special guests, mostly female, in complete privacy. The caretaker whom we called Santos was discerning and efficient. He knew just what food to order from the Keg Room of the Jai Alai for just the right number of people. And he knew just when conveniently to disappear to leave the guests all by themselves.

I KNEW OF at least four hobbies of Don Manuel: swimming, horseback riding, bridge and poker. I had had occasion to join him in some of his swimming and riding sessions, but never in bridge and poker. I understand he was a crackerjack at poker although I have heard it said, too, that many of his multi-millionaire poker cronies were seldom too anxious to beat him.

I do not recall the precise circumstance, but sometime in the 1920s, when he was still fighting for top leadership, Don Manuel stayed for several months with Philip and me in a bungalow we were renting on Manga avenue in Sta. Mesa. What remains vivid in my memory was that he stayed up late almost every night writing his speeches in longhand. Apparently, he was not used to dictating his thoughts to a a stenographer.

You'd think Quezon was a little-time *provinciano* just out of Baler when he was with us on Manga avenue. He liked to be completely casual. He moved about the house in *chinelas,* sometimes just in underwear. No gourmet, he liked the old Filipino common dishes: *sinigang, adobo, sinañgag* and *tinapa* in the morning.

Quezon kept old friendships even after he hit the top. When he married Doña Aurora, he built himself a home on Roberts street in Pasay and whether in Pasay or later in Malacañang, the Quezons often invited their old friends to social functions. My wife Lolita was among the close friends of Doña Aurora.

ONE EARLY MORNING, the telephone in the house rang. It was a call for my wife, Lolita, and it was the President of the Philippines at the other end of the line.

Don Manuel told Lolita he was very sorry for the incident the day before. He was profuse with apologies and pretty soon, Lolita was laughing out loud. Don Manuel had humored her.

The previous day, Don Manuel and his family were guests at a horseshow and riding exhibition at Los Tamaraos. My mount was to take a high jump over a barrier when, suddenly, something scared the horse. It balked and I was thrown off.

My wife was mortified, but Don Manuel must have thought I had no business posing as an expert jumper and said so in somewhat harsh language, unaware that Lolita was within earshot. Lolita ignored protocol and, in effect, let the President of the Commonwealth know she was not pleased with his remarks.

The call from the Palace early the next morning ended the incident.

IT SEEMED DON MANUEL kind of trusted me. In several instances, when something went wrong in an office, he had me take over as his trouble-shooter. That was why there were times when I had to hold down several jobs all at the same time. Once, he had me serving concurrently as director of animal industry, undersecretary of agriculture, acting director of the Bureau of Commerce, manager of the National Trading Corporation, manager of the NARIC and food administrator. Not once did I approach him to get any of those fairly high positions.

Correction: I did hint to him once my preference for a position, too. I felt awfully embarrassed because I had

not asked him for anything like it before or since, and he must have thought I wanted a really big job for me to swallow my pride so.

He looked as though he was let down when I finally told him all I wanted was to fill a vacancy for one of the nine directors of the Philippine National Bank. He seemed perplexed. He could not figure out why I should be so interested in a sideline that fetched a mere ₱30 per diem per meeting.

What Don Manuel did not know — and I never told him — was that deep in me I had a secret yearning to be involved in the banking business. That yearning had hounded me for about 30 years, since that day Lola Ninay sent me word upon my graduation from high school at Boone's that it was her wish that I, her favorite grandson, must take up banking at the University of California because she had dreams of seeing me one day as president of a bank which she was then organizing.

Lola Ninay's bank failed, and I finally wound up becoming a horse doctor, but the frustration of my missing a banking career to make Lola Ninay happy had stuck like a leech in the back of my mind all these years.

When I walked into the board room of the PNB as director for the first time, I thought I saw my beloved Lola Ninay beaming with satisfaction. President Quezon never knew how happy he made me when he gave me the only position I ever asked of him. It was a small position, really. But it was priceless to me!

Don Manuel always had been the Leader to me. He was my General and I was one of his many faithful petty officers.

He had been dead about four years — ironically he died in the U.S. just as victory in World War II was almost at hand — when the twist of fate had willed it that Don Manuel's winsome daughter, Maria Zeneida, should walk down the aisle the evening of February 23, 1947, to become the bride of my war-hero son, Philip. It gave me a rather queer feeling realizing that the man whom I had worshipped all my life should now become, posthumously, my *balae*.

24

AS I KNEW QUEZON, THE STATESMAN

From one "Castila" to another: the sting of a martillazo.

THEY SAY President Quezon was an impulsive man. I don't think so. On the contrary, he was careful, even calculating, at least on matters of state.

Sometime in 1938, the honorable Commissioner of the Census, Leonardo Festin, filed charges of corruption against an American census expert named Ray Hurley. Ray had recommended the purchase of certain IBM tabulating machines for the automatic processing of the census data and Mr. Festin insinuated that Hurley had some pecuniary interest in the deal. I was not mentioned in the complaint, but a smear attempt had made the rounds of the Round Table at Tom's Dixie Kitchen that I, too, had a finger in the alleged pie. (Tom's place on Plaza Goite was the hangout of the cognoscenti of that period.)

Actually, Hurley had been brought over from Washington on my initiative as member of the Census Commission. We were groping for correct statistics at the NARIC. With-

out dependable production and consumption figures, we could not plan an effective price stabilization and rice distribution program.

I had learned from some contacts that it was possible to ask the U.S. Bureau of the Census to lend us an expert, so I wrote to my brother Philip, who was then in Washington with President Quezon, to sound the President out on asking the U.S. Government for this technical assistance. That started a series of steps that eventually led to the appointment of Hurley as adviser to the newly-formed Census Bureau.

When Hurley came, I got him in touch with the right people, particularly Festin. Hurley was a burley, tough-talking hombre with a no-nonsense approach to things. Prior to Hurley's arrival, Festin and his crew had already prepared a questionnaire for census-taking that contained some 900 questions in about 50 pages. Hurley was shocked. If that questionnaire were adopted, the job would be too taxing both for the enumerator and the citizen. Hurley said the questionnaire stunk and he promptly boiled it down to some 90 questions in two pages.

Festin was offended. He called Hurley down in a stinging memo and finally filed formal charges against Hurley for alleged corruption. The charges contained a number of oblique insinuations that Hurley and I were in together on a shady deal. The complaints went all the way up to Malacañang.

President Quezon confronted me with this complaint in a most unexpected way. That afternoon, I was all absorbed attending to hundreds of details for it was the inauguration of the Los Tamaraos Polo Club. The president of the club,

"Mike" Elizalde, was playing polo in an exhibition game as part of the inaugural show, so I had to carry all the load of hosting in my capacity as vice-president of the newly-formed club.

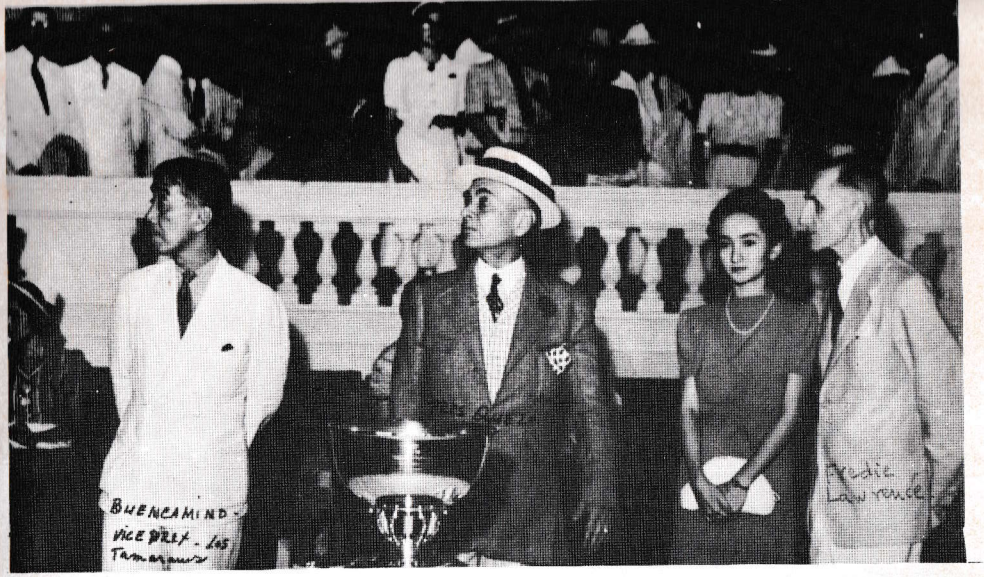
Don Manuel, who was guest of honor, had barely taken his seat in the presidential box when, all of a sudden, he asked me to give him a fill-in on the Festin charges. I was caught flat-footed. I knew he was going to call me in on this case sooner or later, but I did not expect him to even think of it on such a festive occasion. I had no chance to work out in my mind anything like a rehearsed presentation, so all I could do was give it to him straight. No trimmings, no frosting.

All the time I was telling my story, he was watching me rather intently. I think this was his technique: he could tell just by your spontaneous reaction to his questions whether or not to believe you.

In any case, I was relieved when he said later that he had seen Festin's complaints and thought they were unfounded but that he would not dismiss the charges outright, especially as I, who was supposed to be close to him, was involved.

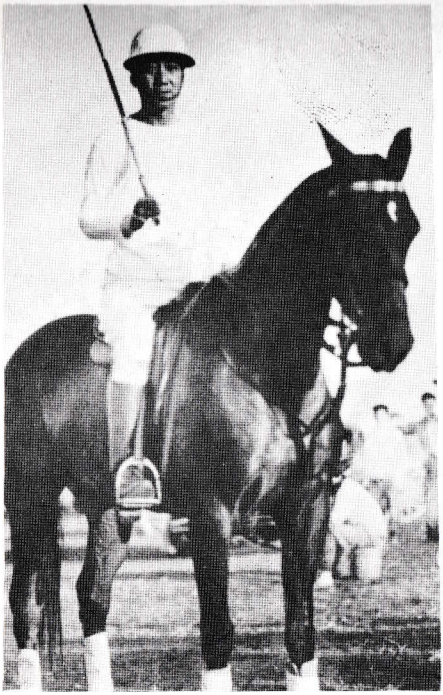
Instead, Quezon took the trouble to name former Senator and later Judge Francisco Enage as special investigator. Prolonged hearings were held and Enage in the end recommended dismissal of the charges. But Quezon did not stop there. He took the added precaution of endorsing the Enage report to Civil Service Commissioner Jose Gil for review and comment.

Gil confirmed that there was absolutely no irregularity involved, but he commented that the "misunderstanding"



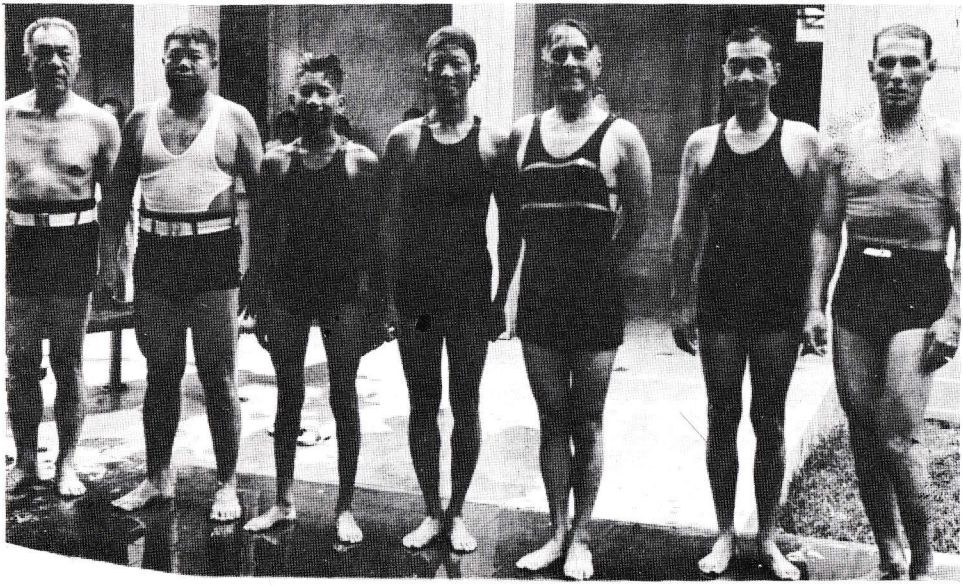
President Quezon presided over the inauguration of the Los Tamaraws Polo Club which was organized in 1934 on his inspiration as a counterfoil to an exclusivist foreign polo club. I hosted the ceremonies as club vice president because the president, Mike Elizalde, played an exhibition match. Also in photo are Baby Quezon and Freddie Lawrence, director.

The Los Tamaraws clubhouse was a social center. Here, President Quezon is seen between his close friend, Joe Stevenot of PLDT, and myself during one of the club socials in 1935.



My first polo pony was a beautiful mare named Mary Lee. Photo was taken between chuckkers of a club match at Los Tamaraws in 1934.

All three personal physicians of President Quezon prescribed swimming to build his resistance to chronic consumption. He obeyed, provided that the doctors swam with him. At the Malacañang Park pool sometime in 1936 are Dr. Antonio Vasquez, Dr. Herminio Velarde, Antonio Sison, Jr., Dr. Sison, the President, and, next to me, Senior Aide Manuel Nieto.



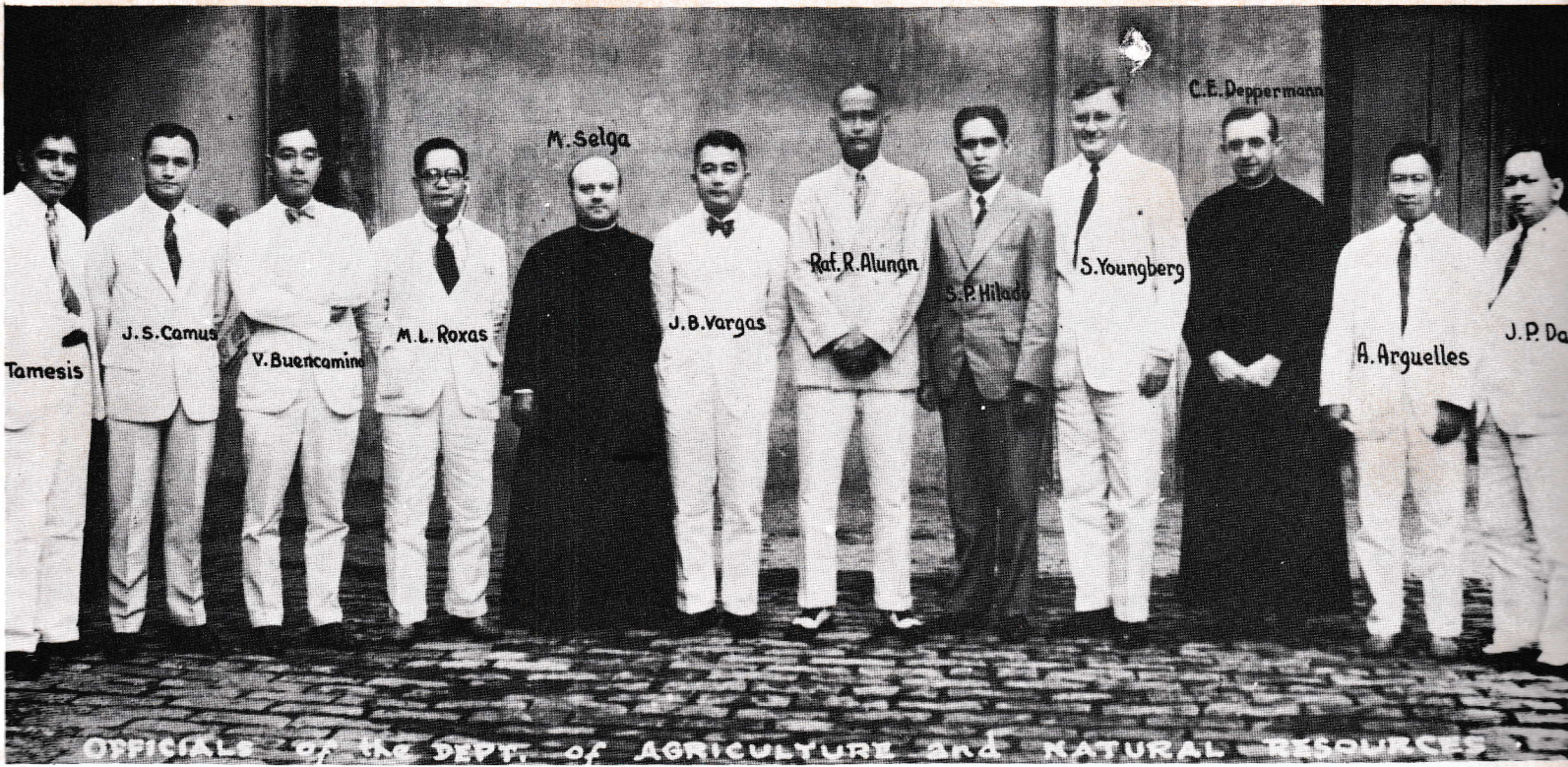
Dolore y
Victore:

Retrati de tres mujeri — Lolita llorare, Carmencita enfadare, y Virginia acabare despertare. Los tres masculini, Vic risueñare, Tony hambugari, y Rommy asustare.

Ricordo di baletsentare, andare y saltare en la mansioni di Quezoni, agosti 18, 1935.

Virgi y
Rommy

Publisher Carlos P. Romulo's sense of humor is shown in a dedication in Italianized Spanish he wrote on the backside of this photograph taken during the costume party on the eve of President Quezon's birthday in 1935. Our group wore formal attire of *cabeza de barangay* during the Spanish times. Next to me, from left, are Virginia Romulo, CPR, my wife Lolita, Dr. Antonio Vasquez and his wife Carmen.



This group of officials of the Department of Agriculture, Commerce and Natural Resources represent the very first batch of Filipinos to replace Americans in key government positions. Photo, taken in 1932, shows only one American left as bureau director. From left, Florencio Tamesis, Director of Forestry; Jose Camus, Assistant Director of Plant Industry; Victor Buencamino, Director of Animal Industry and concurrently Acting Director of Commerce; Manuel L. Roxas, Underse retary; Miguel Selga, Director, Observatory; Jorge B. Vargas, Unde secretary; Rafael Alunan, Secretary of Agriculture; Serafin Hilado, Dire tor of Lands; Stanton Youngberg, Director of Animal Industry; C. Dappermann, Assistant Director, Observatory; Angel Arguelles, Direct of Science; and Jose P. Dans, Assistant Director of Lands.

might have been avoided if Hurley had been a little more diplomatic and had not hurt the pride of Festin.

Only after such a double checkout of the Festin charges did President Quezon formally announce the acquittal of Hurley from the charges. In effect, I was cleared, too.

President Quezon told me later that if he had quashed the Festin complaint summarily, he would have been placed on the defensive. As it was, due process was followed. It was tedious but it spared Quezon any possible charge of arbitrariness, even dictatorship.

PRESIDENT QUEZON liked to sound out his associates before making important appointments. I recall that one evening, after a little bull session at the Columbian, he asked me what I thought of the three generals, whom he was considering for the position of chief of staff of the Armed Forces: Vicente Lim, Basilio Valdes and Fidel Segundo.

I said I thought General Lim had the best technical qualifications; that General Segundo had earned a reputation for courage and discipline; that General Valdes had an added savvy, being a full-fledged doctor of medicine.

Don Manuel said there was an extraneous factor he had to consider. He had just asked General MacArthur to come over and help build a citizen army and at that stage American assistance in technique and material was crucial. There was, therefore, much liaison work that a chief of staff had to do with the American army and navy commanders and he had to select one best suited for establishing social and personal contacts with the American commanders. That was

how the socially-polished General Valdes became his first chief of staff and remained so up to the outbreak of the war.

ON ANOTHER OCCASION, Don Manuel admitted to us that although the Legislature was, in theory, independent of the Executive, he went out of the way to influence the choice of speaker of the Assembly.

No doubt Assemblyman Manuel Roxas was best qualified, but Quezon said it was in the greater interest of the nation to have a more cooperative speaker at that stage when the structure of the Commonwealth was in the making. That was how the relatively unknown but more compliant Negros Assemblyman, Gil Montilla, became speaker to everyone's surprise, including Montilla himself.

I rather suspected Don Manuel purposely worked to downgrade Roxas then to chastise the latter for bitterly fighting Don Manuel in the Hare-Hawes-Cutting controversy. But in time, Don Manuel recognized Roxas' talents and told his friends he thought Roxas was best qualified to succeed him as president some day.

ONE DAY IN 1937, I was astounded when I read in the papers that my friend, Mike Elizalde, had been fired as head of the National Development Co. I knew Mike well. We played polo together and I knew he was a staunch and loyal supporter of President Quezon.

That afternoon, I saw Don Manuel and I told him I thought he was being harsh on Mike...

"Ese Castila!" Don Manuel barked back, "tengo que darle un martillazo!"

I found out later from George Vargas what had actually happened. It seems that Don Manuel wanted to transfer Mike to another position and he ordered George to so advise Mike. This was something new to the head of the Elizalde empire: a mere secretary telling him what to do! A proud man, Mike took Vargas' directive as an insult. He was taking orders only from the President in person. So he fired a letter of resignation.

George told me that when President Quezon received the letter of resignation, the President barked: "Tell Mike that if he does not withdraw his letter of resignation I might accept it!"

Anyway, the papers blew the story up and said Mike had been fired, which was not so. But Don Manuel let it be known that he would not stand for anyone snobbing even a delegated order from him and George told me Mike in the end withdrew his letter of resignation.

Actually, Don Manuel always had liked Mike. When the heat blew over, the President sent Mike to Washington as resident commissioner.

I thought this incident was funny because Don Manuel whom we all called the "Castila" called Mike a haughty "Castila."

I LIKE TO RECALL an incident which, to my mind, was revealing of the high level of integrity that President Quezon had set for himself and for the people around him in government.

Sometime in January of 1939, Henry Belden, then head of the AG & P and one of the directors of the Philippine Racing Club in Santa Ana, surprised me with an offer of the presidency of that racing organization.

I was flattered. I did not seek the job. Once before, this group had imported about 150 race horses from Australia and, strictly as a technical man, I was asked to manage the job of getting these animals conducted from Manila South pier to the Sta. Ana Turf Club. This was an unprecedented and difficult operation because horses could get frightened or unruly in transit and could easily break their legs or otherwise get hurt. I was fortunate in having been able to organize a corps of grooms and caretakers with enough experience in handling horses. The whole job was done without a hitch.

The American owners of the race track, who then included my friends John Canson and Eddie Tait as well as Henry Belden, must have liked the way I handled that job, aside from the fact that I was a vet and was fond of polo horses.

I told Henry to give me a few days to think it over and that, in any case, I'd have to clear the matter with President Quezon.

At first, I did not see any conflict of interest. I was to devote no more than an hour per working day at the race track. And I was personally interested in improving the breed of local race horses.

I brought the matter up with my chairman at the NARIC, Don Vicente Singson Encarnacion, and he said he did not see anything objectionable in the proposition.

It took some time before George Vargas could take the matter up with President Quezon and I immediately sensed,

from the way George was evading the topic later, that something was amiss. One afternoon, I had to see President Quezon on an urgent NARIC business — our proposal to reduce the tariff on rice imported by the NARIC — and I decided to confront him once and for all about the racing job.

"Victor," Don Manuel said, quite pointedly, "your reputation is of the very best; protect it."

I felt a little sick inside me. I understood what he meant. In a later talk with Speaker Roxas, who was a director at the NARIC, he told me that when he mentioned my case to President Quezon the previous week, Don Manuel had said I should never even have entertained the proposition. This was because racing was a form of gambling and Mr. Quezon did not think much of any government man being in any way connected with any gambling organization.

I do not recall now how much emolument the Sta. Ana people were offering me, but I am certain it was much more than what I was getting at the NARIC. Just the same, I turned down the job after learning Quezon's views on the matter.

IT IS WORTH noting at this point that one of the big problems perennially facing government has been the relatively low pay of government officials compared with items in the private sector. That is why in the postwar years it has become common practice to give Cabinet members and other high government officials some sidelines as directors or something that give per diems to augment their income.

In President Quezon's day, a government official was made to serve on certain government boards only if the nature of his full-time job was such that his presence on the

board was considered essential. Or one could be assigned any number of extra jobs — at not one cent more pay — as was the case with me when I served concurrently as director of animal industry, acting director of commerce, acting under-secretary of agriculture and acting manager of the National Trading Company.

Times, indeed, have changed. Cabinet men today hold down directorships that pay them a larger per diem per meeting than their full month's pay — plus representation allowances!

ON SATURDAY EVENING of October 28, 1939, I made some entries in my diary about a chat I had earlier that evening with President Quezon. At the table with us was Dr. Carlos P. Romulo. We called Rommy "doctor" because we noted he liked being called such since that big day at the University of Notre Dame when he was awarded a doctorate, honoris causa, in the presence of President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

I think Don Manuel liked to discuss controversial matters when Rommy was around because he wanted his views clearly explained by Rommy in the *Herald,* of which Rommy was then editor and publisher.

Quezon first talked about his orders to control the price of prime commodities, especially rice. He said the rice traders were complaining because they felt they were being deprived of a chance to earn good money. But Don Manuel said he had no choice. As between the merchants and the consumers, the consumers must be served first. I noted in my diary that evening that though he did not say so in more precise lan-

guage, Don Manuel in effect had just given me a directive for the NARIC: keep the price of rice low; never mind the profits.

From price control, Don Manuel switched to the question of nationalizing certain essential industries.

He said aliens had a strange-hold on many of the key industries here and he thought it was time the government took over and then gradually turned them over to Filipino entrepreneurs.

He admired the courage with which the Mexican government had seized foreign-owned oil fields.

Rommy's eyes brightened with the prospects of scoring a clean scoop when Don Manuel revealed that he had been under heavy pressure from the U.S. High Commissioner, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and even the State and War departments not to proceed with his announced policies of nationalizing key industries.

"But I don't mind them," Quezon said.

To the credit of Rommy, he did not publish the off-the-record story. I am told that latter-day Manila newsmen were not as ethical.

ONE OF THE activities taken over by the government under Quezon was the operation of the Manila Port Terminal. And thereby hangs a tale.

Quezon said he was walking down the street of a plush south shore neighborhood one morning when he noticed a palatial residential house under construction. He learned that the owner was connected with the arrastre operations. He

there and then decided to look more deeply into the Terminal situation and decided that the arrastre service was too juicy a contract to award to private operators and too essential a service not to be under government control.

Sure enough, Quezon recalled, the government earned a tidy sum within months after taking over the Terminal job.

I recall this incident because in the postwar years, the arrastre service had become literally a bloody battleground among rival private operators. And, I am told, many palatial residences have sprung out in the suburbs, thanks to the government's decision after the war to revert to the former practice of having private enterprise handle arrastre services.

Which reminds me of a true story: Don Manuel never was too affluent and he had hinted that he could use some donations from friends to help finance one of his independence missions to Washington.

The story went that Quezon was on the verge of cancelling his trip due to insufficiency of funds when the then head of San Miguel Corporation, Don Antonio "Nonong" Roxas, handed Don Manuel a check. To Quezon's surprise and delight, it was a blank check — Quezon could write on it any figure he wanted. I never learned how much Quezon wrote on the blank check, but I was told later that precisely because of Nonong Roxas' trusting gesture, Don Manuel did not abuse his patron's confidence.

Quezon's brand of leadership was such that his rich friends were always around when he needed support, especially for his independence campaign. I would not say for sure that these rich friends of his never received some favors in return. But I have never heard anyone say Don Manuel ever peddled influence. He was a trusted and loved leader to the very end.

25

THE ERA OF ELEGANCE ON THE DANCE FLOOR

There's a big difference between social giants then and now.

TONIGHT, 14 November 1937, President and Mrs. Manuel L. Quezon will honor Speaker Gil Montilla and the members of the National Assembly at a reception and ball in Malacañang. It is an annual tradition that dates back some 30 years, when the American governors general honored the members of the Legislature.

By any yardstick, this is the biggest social event of the year. Only the top leaders in government, the military, the consular corps, the professions and the business community are invited. An invitation to Malacañang not only is an honor and a recognition; it is a command.

Men come in strictly formal attire: either in tuxedo or in *chaquetilla.* In the very early days, the top dogs came in white tie and tails, and in later years, the double-breasted white sharkskin, introduced by Governor General Frank Murphy and popularly identified as "Murphy Style," became more popular.

The ladies — wow! Tonight, they come bejewelled and bedecked in their biggest sparklers and their *terno* will be excitedly described in tomorrow's society pages. I am told many of these *ternos* can set back each lady, or more accurately, her big-shot husband, all of a thousand ducats — a fantastic fortune in those days — and most of these ladies will never wear the same *terno* in any Manila function ever again!

The top guests, some fifty of them, will troop in around seven in the evening for a state dinner which will be topped off with an exchange of champagne toasts. President Quezon will wish the Speaker success in running the current session of the Assembly while Speaker Montilla will rise and simply say, "To the President."

Then those selected to do the *rigodon de honor* will assemble in the President's study and by now the main hall of the Palace will be filled with guests.

When I give the signal to Colonel Loving, his trumpeters will sound some flourishes and the Constabulary Band will play a march. The door opens and, amid a thunderous applause, President Quezon emerges with Mrs. McNutt at his side, followed by Speaker Montilla who escorts Doña Aurora. Fourteen other couples follow and take their assigned positions.

Tonight, at the *cabecera* on the river side of the hall, President Quezon and his partner will stand in the center, flanked on his right by General Holbrook who is escorting Mrs. Osmeña. To Quezon's left, Mrs. Quirino is paired with Admiral Myers. High Commissioner McNutt is out of the country at the moment while General MacArthur never participates in any *rigodon*. Major Eisenhower is not invited:

he is an obscure technician on MacArthur's staff and does not rate as yet any protocol rank.

Across the hall in the opposite *cabecera,* Speaker Montilla and Mrs. Quezon are flanked by Vice-President Osmeña and Mrs. Holbrook to the Speaker's right and by Resident Commissioner Paredes and Mrs. Myers to the Speaker's left.

Five pairs line up on each of the sides, completing the "Square," which in fact is a rectangle. They include Assemblymen Roxas, Oppus, Zulueta and Sabido, Secretary of Agriculture Rodriguez and Justice Jose Abad Santos.

I give the cue to Colonel Loving; the band strikes; the pairs bow gracefully to each partner and the *rigodon* is on!

I am told the *rigodon* was introduced in the country by the Spaniards at least a century ago. All state balls have started with the *rigodon* since then.

I am giving the cue to the band and to the dancers tonight because I am the *rigodon* master. I have been it since the days of Governor Stimson and I will be it up to the brief tenure of President Magsaysay.

Tonight, the dancers will be in step. They should be; after all, I had spent the previous five nights averaging three hours of rehearsals with them. As they faultlessly go through these six figures of the *rigodon* — the salute; the sigzag; the sway; the visit; the small chain and, finally the big chain — they give no hint of the headaches and the heartaches that I had had to suffer all week. The list had to be revised at least three times because President Quezon heard from Doña Aurora that Madame So and So would be mortified if she were left out. I set rehearsals at eight; many prima donnas appear at 10. But my biggest problem was how to put some

grace in the steps of some men who have neither the ear for timing nor the grace for dancing.

I RECALL a few years back the first night of the rehearsal for the ball hosted by Governor General Theodore Roosevelt, the son. Teddy was an old artillery hand and he marched with what looked to me like a German goose step.

"I'm afraid I'll have to manhandle you," I told the Governor.

"Like hell you will," Teddy retorted. "No one, but no one shall ever manhandle me!"

After a while, however, he realized I did not mean it the way he thought I did, and it took some doing but Teddy on the big night did his *rigodon* passably.

Governor Murphy was my favorite American *rigodon* pupil. He picked up the paces real fast and, anyway, he loved to dance. He could rhumba almost as well as Don Manuel did and, being a bachelor, he was a big favorite among the *dalagas* of Manila's social set.

Before the regular session of the Assembly is over, the Speaker and members of the Assembly will honor President and Mrs. Quezon at a return reception and ball in the fiesta pavillion of the Manila Hotel. This is a tradition of long standing, too. But in the early days these balls were held right in the marble hall of the Ayuntamiento where the Legislature held it sessions.

ONE DAY IN DECEMBER of 1939, Secretary Vargas transmitted to me a nice letter sent to him by Colonel Loving. It seems that of the people who danced the *rigodon de honor* at the Manila Hotel that weekend, only Vargas and Secretary Alunan marched in perfect time with the music. Loving was distressed by this desecration of the dancing art and he suggested to George that a modern *rigodon* be choreographed to the tune of martial music. He suggested that it be called *rigodon militar*. He volunteered to compose the appropriate music.

My comment to Colonel Loving's suggestion was that his idea was grand if it were possible to select the *rigodon* participants so that only those who have aptitude for dancing were chosen. I pointed out that what he was thinking of required rigid military precision and only a very small percentage of the big wheels who take part due to protocol would qualify.

I lost track of Colonel Loving soon after that and his *rigidon militar* never materialized. In fact, the *rigodon* itself gradually disappeared from the scene.

IT FILLS ME WITH nostalgia everytime I recall those good old days when a *rigodon de honor* opened a gala affair. It is as if the golden age of elegance has gone.

The *rigodon* was *de rigueur* at every formal ball as far back as I can recall. Lola Ninay told me they danced it to open the gala occasions at the Club Internacional where the elite of the pre-revolutionary days met, gossiped and, for the most part, gambled.

In later years, the social life of Manila's elite was centered at the Tiro al Blanco and the Club Filipino. The Tiro had a big clubhouse out at Sta. Mesa, then one of the more fashionable sections of Manila. It was the hangout of the more affluent businessmen. At that time the rich folk were held in higher social esteem than were the men in government.

At the Tiro, the ring leaders included the Earnshaw brothers, Tomas and Manuel, along with Dr. Trinidad Pardo de Tavera, the Fernandez brothers of Maritima fame and the intellectual Del Rosario brothers. They had a shooting gallery there and a couple of tennis courts, but Tiro became more synonymous with gambling. At fabulously high stakes, too.

Don Tomas Earnshaw particularly cut quite a figure in the social set in the early 30s. He made it his hobby, year after year, to gather the cream of society around about carnival time and organize what was then known as the *comparsa.* This was a group of prominent young men and women who formed a dance group, all dolled up in some fancy uniform. They presented a few dance numbers as some kind of a volunteer floor show during the big nights at the carnival. At that time, you did not belong if you were not in the *comparsa.*

The young people loved it because Don Tomas gave them an excuse for stepping out and doing some romancing. Some *comparsa* numbers prescribed masked costumes and, quite often, a few partners would disappear incognito into some of the isolated corners of the carnival grounds undetected by the chaperons. I should know. I was in the *comparsa* for many years.

I was more at home at the Club Filipino than at the Tiro. Unlike the Tiro, the Club Filipino was a more relaxed and congenial retreat. There was little, if any, gambling. There was tennis. And its New Year's Eve balls were fabulous.

There was stiff competition between the Tiro and the Club Filipino as to which was giving the more lavish ball. The older and richer folk went to the Tiro; the younger, gayer ones to the Club Filipino.

For years, these clubs furnished guests with a carnet at the big dances. It was a folded card about the size of a pocket memo book with a tiny pencil fastened to it with a silken cord. The pieces that the orchestra will play were listed on the carnet and, at the start of the affair, you went around to your favorite dancing partners and reserved the specific number of your mutual choice.

Some carnets identified the pieces by number, but most of them merely identified the pieces by the tempo: waltz, two-step, ragtime. By the time the more fancy steps came along, the carnet had disappeared.

THE DECADE OF THE 30s saw most everybody who was anybody indulging in modern dances. Quezon was a famous tango dancer. A number of his cronies, among them Speaker Jose Yulo, loved to do the Latin steps. It got to be so that many rich *aficionados* went all the way to New York and took lessons at the Arthur Murray studios to keep up with the latest ballroom craze. Mrs. Yulo once brought over one of the Arthur Murray teachers to give lessons to her crowd.

How times have changed! Since the last war, I have observed how so many wretchedly impoverished fellows en-

tered politics and became fabulously rich. They became social giants — in nightclub row and among local movie moppets. They do not dance the *rigodon*.

In the years before the war, I knew of many rich social giants who entered politics and ended up wretchedly poor. But most of them were real statesmen. They danced the *rigodon*. And they were honest, too.

26

BREAKING THE RACE BARRIER

We danced all night where brown men never danced before.

IF IT WAS THE intention of the American policy makers to send Filipino students to the U.S. to Americanize them or otherwise make them forget their national aspirations, that intention boomeranged on them. For when these Filipinos returned home, they became, as a rule, more fiercely nationalistic than ever.

That figured. In the U.S. classrooms they had to join other students in pledging loyalty "to the United States of America, one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." This exercise evoked a strong wish among Filipino students to pledge loyalty to their own nation.

Distance and nostalgia had made them miss home badly. And, in my own case, the little incidents of discrimination against Orientals, particularly on the West Coast, rankled long in my mind.

So it was, that when I returned home, first in 1906 and again in 1911, I found it totally revolting that in my

own country there were too many places where we Filipinos were off limits.

I had never forgotten that incident in Baguio when Secretary Dean C. Worcester slept in the comfort of a fireplace at the Pines while we poor Filipino underlings shivered in a tent nearby. I said to myself then that one day that must not be.

I recalled another incident when I rushed to Camiling, Tarlac province, at the head of a team fighting rinderpest. We were escorted by a battalion of Scouts, headed by a handful of American officers who had set up an exclusive mess all to themselves. I walked into their mess tent one morning, introduced myself as the new vet just out of Cornell and told them I think a doctor rated a seat at the officers' table. They were too dumbfounded to say no.

I recalled that even the government-operated Manila Hotel was by practice if not by decree an exclusive white abode for a good many years before the Commonwealth. And Filipinos were not accepted to membership at the Polo Club, the Manila Golf Club, and the Army and Navy Club. Even the YMCA had a separate building for Americans and Europeans.

The height of it all were the cabarets. Both American-managed, the Sta. Ana cabaret and the Lerma night club had areas reserved exclusively for whites while Filipinos were secluded in a taxi dance area down the hall, fenced out from where the whites amused themselves.

Among us Filipinos who had a bit naively taken the American slogans of freedom and equality too literally, all these instances of prejudice were simply intolerable.

THIS REVULSION TO discrimination at home was primarily back of our mind when, in 1907, at the mezzanine of our Sagunto street home, nine of us returnees from the U.S. organized what we later called the Philippine Columbian Association. The name "Columbian" was misleading. True, Columbia was the symbolic name for America, and it was the name chosen to indicate that the membership was to be limited to Filipino students who had studied in the United States.

It never occurred to us then that by trying to make the club that exclusive, we were ourselves unwittingly practicing an act of discrimination against our own countrymen who had not studied in the U.S.!

The name was misleading because while it suggested affinity to America, the club was in fact rabidly nationalistic.

In any case, there we were, determined to set up a civic and social club as counterfoil to similar clubs we could not join on account of race. There was Ponciano Reyes whom we elected first president and who later became one of the first Filipino judges of the Court of First Instance. There were the two Torres brothers: Antonio who became Manila's chief of police and who, by the way, was one of the first Filipinos to marry an American girl. His wife often suffered indignities from some whites for that. And there was his brother Luis who later became attorney general. Then there was Filemon Perez who became provincial governor of Tayabas and later secretary of public works and communications. And there were four of us former "hostages" from Boone's: the Roces brothers, Marcos and Rafael, and my elder brother Philip and myself.

Most of the pensionados who returned later joined up: the Benitez brothers, Francisco and Conrado; Jorge Bocobo,

Francisco Delgado, Mariano de Joya and Ernesto Escaler among them.

Much later, we opened the club to selected professionals and government men regardless of whether or not they had studied in the U.S. Director of Lands Jorge B. Vargas broke the barrier. He was the first applicant admitted to membership although he had not studied in the U.S.

The club soon became the rallying point for the Filipinism movement. President Quezon held his strategy meetings for his independence movement there. In 1934, the Columbian clubhouse served as headquarters for the National Congress for Philippine Independence.

IT MUST BE SAID, in fairness to the Americans, that not all of them countenanced discrimination against Filipinos. Take Governor Francis Burton Harrison, for instance. There was a man after our own heart. And the Governor General, no less.

When Senate President Quezon one day asked him to spearhead a move to knock down the race barrier, the good Governor — blessed be his soul — volunteered to fight at the very front line.

One day Governor Harrison made a reservation for a small party at the Lerma cabaret. A large table was reserved for him in the middle of the dance floor in a section exclusively reserved for white VIPs. The word had gone around that the Governor General was entertaining some important visitors.

That evening the Governor General's limousine rolled into the front door of the Lerma cabaret, followed by a

smaller car. The Governor gathered his guests and their ladies and led the group straight into the center of the cabaret section where only Occidentals had been permitted to tread before.

There was startled look from the all-white patrons as the mixed group walked in.

Harrison's special guests: President Quezon, his cronies Buenaventura Barona and Dr. Victor Buencamino, and their ladies. We had a juicy steak dinner chased by a steady flow of wine, and we danced all night, somewhat pleased inside us that we were making a little bit of history.

Thus was demolished forever the race barrier in these once exclusively white cabarets.

Gradually, the other exclusive clubs also dropped the racial barriers. And in the meantime, Filipino community leaders, usually in cooperation with liberal Americans, organized their counterpart clubs.

OLD BILL SHAW, the pioneer engineer who had amassed a fortune in the Philippines as head of the AG&P, spearheaded the foundation of the Wack Wack Golf and Country Club in Mandaluyong. The story went that he did not feel at home at the exclusive Manila Golf Club in Caloocan everytime he brought along his Filipina wife and his mestizo child, so he aligned himself with Filipino *aficionados* and founded Wack Wack.

I'll never forget Bill Shaw. At Wack Wack one day in the presence of a number of members, old Bill pulled me to his side at a table where he was devouring a man-size steak.

"I'm sure you don't remember," Bill told me, "but you and I met when you were a boy."

I was surprised. As far as I could recall, I first met him not too long ago when he invited me to join Wack Wack as one of its founding members. He was a hero to us for he did not hide his motive for organizing Wack Wack, which was to spite the white folk who had prejudices against Filipinos.

"Do you remember, Victor, a husky porter who hauled your *baul* from the railroad station in Berkeley to your dormitory at Boone's in 1900? Well, that's me!" (*Baul* is a small wooden trunk.)

All I could say was, "you don't say!"

He went on to recount that he was at that time working his way through college and did in fact earn an engineering degree at the University of California.

Bill Shaw was a self-made millionaire. Every chance he got, he would proudly tell one and all in my presence that once he was my *cargador.*

It pleases me to see that the main road to Mandaluyong is named after him and that there stands near the entrance at Wack Wack a modest monument in his honor.

A SITUATION SIMILAR to the founding of Wack Wack led to the organization of the Los Tamaraos Polo Club at Parañaque. Colonel Manuel Nieto, aide to President Quezon, had been turned down when he applied for membership in the exclusive Manila Polo Club and when President Quezon learned this, he urged his friends, the Elizaldes, to organize the Los Tamaraos.

Another racial battleground was the Rotary Club of Manila. When it was founded in 1919, it was almost exclusively a club of leading American businessmen. Of the 38 charter members, only two — Gabriel La O and Gregorio Nieva — were Filipinos. It was not until 1933 when Arsenio Luz finally made it as the first Filipino president of an organization that was founded to foster fellowship and international understanding. Carlos P. Romulo became the second Filipino Rotary president in 1935 and I became the third in 1938. But for us three, all previous presidents had been Americans or Europeans.

The matter of race prejudice was on my mind when I was elected president of Manila Rotary. I felt I just had to do at least as well as Arsenic and Rommy, for at this stage, the Filipino's capacity to lead this international group of top businessmen and professionals was still under test.

Because I dreaded public speaking, I never aspired to any office in Rotary. The man we were grooming for president that year was Pedro Campos, manager of the Bank of the Philippine Islands. Unfortunately, for both our candidate and myself, Pedro passed away just before the annual election.

One day, a group headed by then Director of Forestry Arthur Fischer came to see me. They wanted me to accept an impromptu nomination. I had to accept the draft, Director Fischer told me, if only to stop another candidate whom the group disdained because he showed interest in the position by campaigning — an unforgivable crime at Manila Rotary, even today.

When I was elected, the members, then numbering some 75, suffered more than I did. During the first month or so, I was strictly an amateur presiding officer. My problems were

worse compounded when the club secretary, an American whom we called "Shorty," manager of Bethlehem Steel, practically abandoned the job. Apparently he could not see himself working under a Filipino president.

So I worked that much harder. I stayed up Wednesday nights working on my introductory remarks and dreaming up something bright and witty to say in between numbers. I was tense and hardly touched my food throughout the luncheon meetings at the Manila Hotel.

When "Shorty" showed no inclination to do his job, I made up my mind to carry his load, too. I was glad when the year was over and quite surprised that the Rotary International headquarters gave us some commendations for our outstanding community projects. And I was happy most of all because by that time it became an unwritten law that the presidency of Manila Rotary should be held alternately by a Filipino and a foreigner. That law prevailed up to the outbreak of the war. Since the war, only two Americans had held that position as against 32 Filipinos.

It makes me happy to realize that I was among the first to help demolish the race barrier in that once impregnable bastion of white supremacy in the Philippines.

WHILE I HAD FELT quite strongly against discrimination in our country, I really don't harbor too much ill will against Americans for it. Come to think of it, the Americans have themselves been suffering morally from their contradictory position of preaching equality as an ideal and not being able to put this ideal into practice.

Don't forget they fought a bitter civil war on this issue and the side of equality had won that war. And yet, after two scores of years and a whole century since Lincoln, America is still bitterly torn apart on this issue.

Prejudices die hard. It was quite a surprise to me to learn back in the U.S. that the restricted area sign not only barred the blacks but even the Jews from classy residential areas and exclusive country clubs. I hear this is still true in many cities there even today.

It is enough for me that at the highest policy level, America stands for equality. It might take another century to finish what Abraham Lincoln had started, but the trend, I am certain, is irreversible.

At least, in my own little world, the battle is being won. I believe the Filipinos have gone a long way from the time they were called *Indios* by the Spaniards. I like to think that the Filipino, by and large, has proved his capability to enter any profession and achieve the cultural level of any other race.

LET US LOOK back a little to the early years of this century. Majority of the Filipinos who went to Hawaii, Alaska and the West Coast were laborers who worked the pineapple fields, canned salmons or picked apples. Filipino students were so few then. After the first World War, majority of the Filipinos who migrated to the U.S. were self-supporting students who worked in factories, took clerical jobs and entered the civil service. But since the last war, the bulk of Filipinos who went to the U.S. were doctors and nurses and engineers and technicians.

If the image of the Filipino in the U.S. has so dramatically improved, it was because the Filipino who migrated there has progressed from an unskilled laborer to an educated technician. I think this thrust reflects the level and quality of the Filipinos' cultural progress at home.

COME TO THINK of it, I had my fights at Boone's over racist remarks, but I like to think the chaps there accepted me into the gang because I showed them I was in no way inferior to any of them.

Dr. Nesom not only treated me well but even inspired me in my choice of a career. At Berkeley and at Cornell I never was made to feel inferior due to race, and at home, while the institution of racial superiority pervaded as it did in all colonies of that period, we had people like Governor Harrison and Governor General Frank Murphy who gave substance to the ideal of equality.

It warms my heart to think that within my lifetime, the Filipino has travelled far in hurdling the racial barrier. My feeling is that he shall move on, but only if he does not permit himself to slip back to the Dark Ages. It will take much effort for the coming generations of Filipinos to keep up with the fantastic pace of change. I pray that having travelled this far, our coming generation will carry on.

27

EIGHT HOURS WORK FOR EIGHT HOURS PAY

President Quezon makes you fall gently into his trap.

DURING THE YEARS immediately preceding the Commonwealth, Senate President Manuel L. Quezon was recognized by the Governors General as leader of the Filipino people and he was invariably consulted by the governors on key appointments in the government. An endorsement by Quezon was almost always followed by an appointment by the Governor General.

Sometime in 1930, I received a note handwritten by President Quezon from his sickbed in a sanatorium at Monrovia, California, where he was recuperating from a recurrent bout with consumption. He said in his note that he plans to ask me to join the government service and that I should expect either Secretary Jorge B. Vargas or Secretary Rafael Alunan to contact me soon to let me know what specific position he was going to offer to me.

He said he was writing a personal note to give me ample time to give this matter a thought. He did not like to notify

me officially offhand because he was certain I would not turn him down once he made my appointment official. He was being considerate to me, he said, because he knew my returning to the government service would mean a heavy financial sacrifice and would require some hard work.

Don Manuel was right. I was not interested in a government job. I was doing fairly well in my professional practice and other sidelines. My reaction was that if he had notified me officially that I was being named to any job, I might have written back just as officially expressing my regrets. But since Don Manuel took the big trouble of sending me a note in his own handwriting at a time when I knew it must have taken him quite an effort to scribble anything in view of his illness, I just did not have the heart to turn him down.

Upon later reflection, I suspected that I walked into another one of those famous psychological ploys of Don Manuel. He made me feel it was all up to me. I fell gently into his trap.

SO, SOMETIME IN 1930, Don Manuel got me back into the government service as assistant director of the Bureau of Animal Industry. And on January 1, 1933, Governor General Theodore Roosevelt named me director, succeeding Dr. Stanton Youngberg, also on Don Manuel's recommendation. I was proud to become the first Filipino director of this Bureau.

But here again, I accepted on one condition: that I was to be permitted to continue operating the Buencamino Veterinary Hospital. Again this was an unprecedented request

and I was glad the Cabinet went out of the way to grant me this concession.

Frankly, I did not want to give up the hospital as some kind of a hedge. I had had occasion to observe how things were run in the government, and I was aware that at director level I could only stay on for as long as I remained in the good graces of the higher authorities. I knew, too, that at that level, one would always be exposed to public criticism as it was impossible to please everyone. I wanted to maintain the hospital as a backstop so that I could swing right back to it anytime I got any hint that my services in the government were no longer wanted.

As bureau head, I followed a few simple rules. All employees under me were getting paid for eight hours of work every working day and I required every employee to punch in and out for a sum total of eight hours of actual work. And I was extra strict about honesty. But while I was strict, I tried all I could always to be fair. I was happy to note that my subordinates accepted these ground rules in the proper light.

At any rate, Don Manuel and the next Governor General, Frank Murphy, must have noted the high morale and discipline in my bureau because they kept calling on me to trouble-shoot everytime there was an emergency elsewhere.

Early in 1934, the director of the Bureau of Commerce resigned to avoid some conflict of interest and Governor General Murphy forthwith named me acting director of the bureau in a concurrent capacity.

The morning I first walked into the office of the director, I could feel the frigid atmosphere among the staff. It

was as though I was an interloper who, being a veterinarian, had no business running a commerce bureau.

I made up my mind I would earn the respect of the people in that bureau. I took it as a test of my capacity to lead. And I thought that for a start, I would lead by example.

I was always in the office long before reporting time. When they saw me already hard at work before their arrival time, I noted that the key people made efforts to report early too, even without my prodding them. And once the key people did that, the rank and file men found it embarrassing not to be around on time.

Every so often, I made the rounds of the department and section heads, inquiring if there were problems. I showed much concern with their problems and I went out of the way trying to help them find the solutions.

Once I felt that things were moving along well in the Manila office, I scheduled a series of visits to the field offices. I think the men out in the provinces appreciated my concern and the extra efforts I exerted to be of help to them.

It did not take long before I thought I had gained acceptance at the Bureau of Commerce. And once I felt at home there, it was not difficult for me to introduce the kind of discipline that I had enforced with rewarding results at the Bureau of Animal Industry.

In fact, by the time I left the Bureau of Commerce, I thought the people there had had gotten fond of me in spite of the stern way I managed that bureau.

I now have in my scrapbook a good number of unsolicited testimonials from colleagues who contended that my brand of firmness and discipline did not hurt them at all in coping with workaday problems later in life.

At the end of my tenure as acting director of the Bureau of Commerce, the key men took it upon themselves to give me a testimonial luncheon during which they wrote their thoughts in a little autograph book which I found recently among my sundry papers.

Secretary Cornelio Balmaceda, then assistant director who succeeded me and who later held several cabinet positions, summed up the feeling of the men this way:

> From the heart, I wish to tell you that I am thankful beyond words for the valuable experience I have had with you as my chief. It was a privilege to be associated with you. Your exemplary care and rare ability as an executive cannot fail to impress anyone who can have the opportunity of being with you . . .

I WAS HARDLY getting into the swing of running two bureaus simultaneously when the undersecretary of agriculture and commerce had to be assigned to some important mission in the Senate. Again I was called upon to fill the spot in an acting capacity.

By this time, I had learned a few tricks. One was to make sure you had a good right-hand man in each job. Then you could hold down three big jobs all at the same time provided you did not mind the back-breaking pace and the long, long hours.

And provided, too, that you could take brickbats in stride. I had my share of problems while holding down three jobs.

One day, an employee in the Bureau of Animal Industry who was moonlighting as reporter in a Spanish-language newspaper denounced me in his newspaper. He said I was

violating the law for holding down a government job while operating a private hospital.

Good thing, I had a clean copy of the Cabinet resolution giving me permission to maintain my hospital. I did not need to make any explanation after this resolution was published.

I found out later that this reporter did not like the way I compelled everybody in the department to punch the bundy clock. He thought he was a prima donna, being a newspaperman. (I notice that today's newsmen also think they are a privileged class.) But he wanted to keep his job, so he obediently punched the clock.

This bundy clock routine got me involved in another case. Under the prevailing procedure, the auditor in the National Trading Corporation, to which I was named manager later, was merely detailed there and was administratively under the Auditor General. He felt he did not fall under my edict about punching the clock and he made a test case of it.

I gave him a proposition: we were to refer the dispute to higher authorities. If he won his point, I was prepared to resign. But if I won, he either must ask for an assignment in another office or he must punch the clock. He punched.

AT THIS POINT, I'd like to say something about my boss at the Department of Agriculture and Commerce, Don Eulogio Rodriguez. He was a wonderful person but, in my opinion at the time, hardly an administrator. Day in and day out, he'd be beseiged at his office by politicians and jobseekers. I doubted if he was getting any work done as department head.

One day I had a chat with President Quezon about Amang Rodriguez I was brutally frank about what I thought was a case of a misfit for such a big job. Whereupon, the President chided me. "You know," Don Manuel told me, "don't belittle Secretary Rodriguez. Everytime I want to find out how the masses feel about any government issue, I consult him. I tell you, he can foretell at least six months ahead just how the people would react to any given issue."

I gave Amang Rodriguez due respect after that.

EARLY IN 1935, the new Constitution was ratified. It provided in no uncertain terms that full-time government officials must not engage in any private business. Moreover, I thought President Quezon should be given a chance to start his stint as head of the Commonwealth with a completely clean slate. So, effective upon the establishment of the Commonwealth, I resigned my positions as acting undersecretary of agriculture and commerce and concurrently acting director of commerce and full-time director of the Bureau of Animal Industry.

Before leaving the government service, I had to select between two fine proteges whom to recommend to be director of the Bureau of Animal Industry. It was not an easy choice between two outstanding candidates: Dr. Angel Gomez and Dr. Gregorio San Agustin.

Both were bright fellows. Both had graduated with honors from the College of Veterinary Science in the same class. And by then, they both held the rank of associate professor in that college.

Of the two, Dr. Gomez was a bit more decisive. I knew his capabilities well because he had worked with me for awhile in my private hospital. But he was not strong on one point: he was not too orderly and did not have much patience with small details.

Dr. San Agustin was not as sharp as Dr. Gomez but was meticulous with details. He was absolutely dependable. Give him an assignment and you can forget it. You can be sure he will deliver.

And so I picked San Agustin to head the bureau, but instead of making him concurrently dean of the college, as had been the practice for years, I worked it out so Dr. Gomez became the dean of the College of Veterinary Science.

As it turned out, mine was a happy choice. San Agustin developed to be one of the best directors the bureau ever had while Dr. Gomez left an outstanding record as dean of the college.

WITHIN TWO MONTHS after the establishment of the Commonwealth, President Quezon organized in earnest a number of semi-government corporations charged with certain economic development activities. These corporations were operated by autonomous boards. There was no ban on naming qualified persons in private business as directors or managers of these corporations.

In 1936, the second year of the Commonwealth, I was appointed vice president and manager of the National Rice and Corn Corporation. And thereby hangs another tale.

Looking back now, it would appear as though I was an overly ambitious person, holding down so many jobs at the

same time. But the fact is that I perhaps had erred more on the side of lacking ambition.

One day, I was enjoying a horseback ride with Governor General Frank Murphy when he startled me with a proposition. "We're looking for someone who'd make a good mayor for the City of Manila, Victor, and President Quezon tells me you have demonstrated the kind of administrative ability that should make you a good city mayor. How about it?"

I almost fell off my horse. I told the Governor I appreciated the gesture but I frankly did not believe I had sufficient grounding for such a strictly political job. Back of my mind was my father's advice to us never to get into politics.

Murphy looked surprised. He could not believe I was actually turning him down when so many known aspirants were lobbying for that prestigious job. But he respected my wish.

Then sometime in 1942, while playing tennis at the Philippine Club (the Japanese had ordered that the Philippine Columbian Club drop Columbian because it was an American symbol), "George" Vargas, then chairman of the Philippine Executive Commission running the government, told me he was thinking of transferring Mayor Leon Guinto to another job and he asked me if I would be interested in taking over the mayorship. I said I thought Mayor Guinto was doing a good job and, anyway, I felt I was not prepared to take on such a politician's job.

George was a stubborn man. About two weeks later, again at the Philippine Club, in the presence of Dean Conrado Benitez, Vargas again offered me the mayorship of Manila.

"George," I replied, "I suppose you still like me and you want me to live longer. In my present state of health — so run down as I am now — running the City of Manila as mayor will kill me."

I like to think I used good judgment in resisting the tempting offer. Except for Amang Rodriguez, I do not know of anyone who held the job as city mayor of Manila and lived into his 80s.

28

ENOUGH RICE FOR THE MASSES; ENOUGH EARNINGS FOR THE FARMER

Besides stabilizing the price of rice, NARIC wrested the business from alien hands.

I LIKE TO THINK I have had more than my share of romance and adventure pioneering in certain uncharted frontiers of Philippine life. But to me, the most challenging pioneering work was my little effort as organizer, manager and vice president of the National Rice and Corn Corporation (NARIC), a job I held for eight years from 1936 and well into the war in 1944.

It was a truly challenging assignment. No sooner was the Commonwealth established with great hopes and expectations in 1935 than the country was threatened with one of the worst rice crises in years. Production was woefully short. Speculation and hoarding were rampant. The very stability of the new Commonwealth was at stake.

Bad enough as the situation was, two other factors entered the picture to make the rice problem even worse: the

eight-hour labor law and the introduction of daylight saving time.

President Quezon permitted the telling of an amusing incident to make the rounds. Manila press commentators made fun of the fact that President Quezon cut short the effectivity of daylight savings time after he reportedly got up an hour ahead of his usual rising time one morning and, in the half darkness, bumped his shin against the corner of a night table in his Malacañang bedroom.

The story went that while writhing in pain, he rung up George Vargas that very minute, threw some choice expletives in Spanish in the direction of the wiseacres who thought of the daylight saving time and forthwith decreed the instant termination of this clock juggling.

Don Manuel was himself enjoying the joke when he told me the real reason: the eight-hour labor law had compelled many retail stores to close at 4:00 p.m. and many citizens, particularly government office workers, had complained to him that with stores closed when they leave their offices, they could not buy rice and other prime commodities on their way home.

What loomed large on his mind was his realization that the rice retailers, who were mostly aliens at that time, were in a position to starve the populace if they wanted to.

And so, lost in the banter that surrounded the termination of the daylight savings time was Don Manuel's decision to set up a government machinery that would effectively wrest control of rice distribution from alien hands.

His move: to promote a legislation creating a national rice commission that would solve all aspects of the rice problem, from production to distribution, once and for all.

With my brother Philip, then an assemblyman from the rice granary of Luzon, Nueva Ecija, as sponsor, the bill was promptly pushed through the Legislature and within the month, the National Rice Commission was at work. One of its major recommendations was the creation of the National Rice and Corn Corporation (NARIC).

THE OBJECTIVES of the NARIC were two-fold: To protect the masses by making rice always available at a price within their reach; and, secondly, to protect the rice farmers and promote production by guaranteeing the purchase of their produce at a price that would assure them a reasonable income.

President Quezon picked a group of hard-hitting people to compose the first Board of Directors of the NARIC. For chairman, the choice was a man of solid reputation, Don Vicente Singson Encarnacion, former Secretary of Agriculture who was then head of a thriving insurance firm. The government side was represented on the board by then Finance Secretary Manuel A. Roxas who was to become the first President of the Independent Republic; and Commerce Director Cornelio Balmaceda. The private sector was represented by Dr. Nicanor Jacinto, a banker; Doña Narcisa Vda. de Leon, a rice producer; and former assemblyman from Cebu Maximino Noel. I was elected vice president and manager, and in that capacity, it fell upon me to organize the agency from scratch.

I was fortunate in having been given by the Board full authority in the choice of personnel. In filling positions, I selected Civil Service eligibles first and, if they were not

available, I was free to employ non-eligibles at my discretion. Merit and merit alone was the prime consideration.

But in being steadfast on this policy, I ran into trouble early in the organizational stage of the corporation.

My brother Philip recommended for assistant manager a well-qualified person who impressed me as more of a promotion man than a plugger. But from the start I had an eye on an administrative man at the Bureau of Animal Industry who had impressed me as completely dependable, conscientious and truthworthy. My brother argued that his man was so technically qualified he even had a hand in the drafting of the Rice Commission Bill. But I felt that this was one position that could make or break my tenure at the NARIC and I already had chosen my own man for this key job. My brother gave up in disgust.

One day President Quezon asked me to hire as chief warehouseman, a very sensitive job, a political supporter from a northern province. It was a crisis. One did not turn down Don Manuel that easily and got away with it. I consulted with my Chairman, Don Vicente, and I told him frankly that if I could not have a man who enjoyed my complete confidence for this key job, I was prepared to tender my resignation.

Don Vicente fell in deep thought for a while and then, to my pleasant surprise, said:

"Dr. Buencamino, I'm 100% behind you. Let's go to Malacañang and persuade the President not to insist."

Don Vicente and I went to Malacañang the next day with signed letters of resignation in our pockets. Don Manuel flushed. He called me a "German blockhead." He cursed in Spanish. In Tagalog. In English. But that was the

Castila for you. Just let the storm blow over and if he was convinced you were sincere and you had a good point, he was never too proud to yield.

"Bueno, bueno," the President said, tapping me on the back. "Just take my man in where his qualifications fit him."

From then on, Don Vicente and I knew that more than half the battle was won. For we knew our task was just too delicate and demanding to afford the luxury of padding the items with useless political recommendees. We did consider the recommendees of political figures. But they had to be truly qualified, or else.

EARLY IN THE GAME, I drew a tough line on discipline. I knew that in an agency charged with the job of purchasing rice and corn running into the millions of pesos the temptation was great for suppliers to curry the favor of our key people. So I issued a circular clearly warning that acceptance of any gift no matter how small for any service rendered was a cardinal offense.

The test came early in a couple of really light cases. One day, someone in the purchasing department received a bottle of *patis* from a dealer. Out he went. In another case, a member of the legal staff notarized a customer's document and collected a measly fee of ₱1.50. But he was supposed to do this chore for free. Out he went, too.

I am quite convinced that these precedent-setting cases had a lot to do with the fairly high brand of discipline that prevailed in the organization right from the start. And it was my good fortune that this kind of discipline was maintained throughout my stint of eight years at the NARIC.

THE NARIC WAS formally organized the first week of April, 1936. Before the month was over, it was almost fully staffed and ready to start business. Back of all this haste was the constant prodding by President Quezon for the agency to bring immediate relief to areas facing rice shortages as a result of two destructive typhoons that hit Luzon the previous year. He also foresaw further deterioration of the rice situation in the next few months before the next harvest. He was particularly anxious to see the NARIC prevent a repetition of last year's scandalous way a large portion of the government's relief rice fell into the hands of speculators who cornered the supply and forced people even in disaster areas to buy at exhorbitant prices.

Twice the NARIC faced crucial disputes with other government agencies and twice President Quezon sided with the NARIC. The first test occurred only 11 days after the NARIC had started selling imported rice to the public. The collector of customs tried to levy more than ₱150,000 in import duty on the first shipment of 50,000 bags. President Quezon ruled that having been assigned to perform relief functions, the NARIC was entitled to import rice duty-free.

In a second test case, President Quezon also ruled that the NARIC was exempt from the 1 1/2 per cent tax on gross sales.

Such a backing from the top man could not but bolster the morale of all levels of the NARIC personnel.

OUR VERY FIRST move was to import rice from Saigon. While waiting for the initial shipment, we purchased about 10,000 cavans of local rice as a temporary standby measure

and in the meantime we conducted a rush survey of the supply and price situation in all provinces to identify the areas needing immediate assistance. In this survey work, we were assisted by local and provincial officials as well as by field men of the Bureau of Commerce and the Constabulary.

We set as reasonable the retail price of 26 centavos a ganta. (One ganta of rice weighed 2.4 kilos; 23.5 gantas made up one cavan of rice of 56.5 kilos.) As fast as we received word that the price in any given area exceeded 26 centavos, we shipped enough stock, usually through the local government officials concerned, to force the price down to 26. Before long, the speculators were out of business. In the Manila area alone, we named some 2,000 retailers who were required to post bonds to guarantee that they would sell at the officially designated price.

At the beginning, the expected happened in all too many instances. Certain retailers sold their stock to hoarders, mostly aliens, at above official price. These speculators in turn shipped their rice to provinces still in short supply and thereby made a killing.

A number of those who prospered before on rice speculation tried to discredit the NARIC by mixing inferior stock with our rice.

But we organized teams who checked up on the flow of our rice to assure that it was sold in certain designated areas at the fixed price. The first month of operations, we suspended a handful of retailers for all sorts of violations. In nine months, we suspended 155. When it became clear that we meant business, only the legitimate retailers stayed on.

The effect of the NARIC operations was dramatic. Just before NARIC got into the picture, rice was retailing at around

₱6.75 per sack of 56 1/2 kilos. The day NARIC started selling, the price went down by 31 centavos per sack. In September, when the seasonal fluctuation usually pulled the price up to its highest, NARIC cut the price down from ₱6.44 to ₱5.98 per sack. By harvest time in November of 1936, even the free market price had hit the rock bottom price of ₱4.90.

So successful was this stabilization program that a number of provincial officials petitioned the government to set up counterpart agencies to handle the sale of other prime commodities using the NARIC formula as model.

HAVING LAID the foundation for a stable rice supply, we next concentrated on the stabilization of the buying price of palay as tenants in certain areas already were showing signs of unrest. This was one of President Quezon's obsessions. Time and again, he reminded us that unless the Government guaranteed the *kasama* a fair price for his palay, there was bound to be violence, especially in Central Luzon.

Don Manuel studied the tenancy problems first hand by developing his own farm in Arayat, Pampanga. He knew the poor *kasama* did not have a chance. Between his landlord and the alien buyer who enticed him by advancing crop loans, the *kasama* was lucky to get ₱1.70 a cavan for his palay.

At a conference in Malacañang one day, President Quezon directed the NARIC to offer ₱2.50 per cavan and to give priority to tenants in buying palay. That marked the end of tenant exploitation and stabilized the palay market wherever NARIC was able to operate.

But not without facing many big problems. The biggest was warehousing. Up to this time, the milling and warehous-

ing businesses were mostly in the hands of alien exploiters or greedy landlords. They were of course uncooperative at the beginning. But when they saw that the NARIC was in business to stay, they gradually abandoned the field by leasing or selling their mills and/or warehouses to the NARIC.

WE AT THE NARIC thought the agency was accomplishing much more than had been expected within so short a time for such a pioneer organization when, out of the blue, a concerted campaign was launched against it in August of 1938. It was a two-fisted drive: In Congress and in the press.

Some 20 legislators, most of them, surprisingly, from the so-called sugar bloc, addressed a petition to President Quezon requesting an investigation of what they claimed was the inordinately high price at which the NARIC was selling its rice. Simultaneously, the DMHM (Debate, Mabuhay, Herald, Monday Mail) chain of newspapers mounted a campaign against the NARIC for the same reason. There was no doubt both assaults were orchestrated from one source. We were taken aback by this synchronized campaign, but we were not too deeply disturbed, either, for we were confident that the allegations were not justified.

Nevertheless, we took the necessary measures to belie these charges.

We called for a press conference. In spite of our special efforts to invite representatives from the DMHM newspapers, no reporter from that chain showed up. But we were gratified at the fair treatment given our side by the other newspapers and magazines.

The big blow in our defense was landed by one of our directors, Manuel A. Roxas, then concurrently secretary of finance and chairman of the National Economic Council. In an in-depth exposition of the NARIC position, Secretary Roxas told the Rotary Club of Manila on 25 August that far from charging an exhorbitant price for its rice, the NARIC had in fact succeeded in keeping the price down to a level within the reach of the consuming masses while at the same time enabling the NARIC to purchase local palay at a price that assured the farmers a fair return for their harvests.

Secretary Roxas showed in simple arithmetic why the then prevailing NARIC price of ₱6.65 was fair. He said the initial cost of palay at the farm was ₱2.50 a cavan (2 cavans of palay to one cavan of rice) or ₱5.00 converted to a cavan of rice. Purchase is done during the harvest months of January or February, when, historically, farmers were forced to sell at giveaway prices due to the glut in supply. The NARIC maintained this price of palay to protect the *kasama* and encourage the expansion of rice farming, Roxas said:

> If the NARIC bought palay at ₱2.50 per cavan in January or February and has stored them in leased or bonded warehouses, paid their insurance, suffered the inevitable depreciation not only in quality but also in quantity which amounts to over 3 per cent of its value, paid the wages of the men who have watched and taken care of that stock, spent for their storage, handling, and preservation, and defrayed the cost of the transportation, it should be clear that the NARIC cannot sell rice at ₱5.50 (the price urged by the Herald) and cover expenses.

"All these cost figures," he said, "did not include overhead expenses."

In that Rotary speech, Secretary Roxas was very tactful. "I do not dispute the motives of those who are launching such vigorous criticisms against the NARIC. In fact, I believe that

their motives are praiseworthy and that they are earnestly and sincerely seeking the protection of the consumers . . .

"But I sincerely feel," Roxas added, "that there are grave reasons of public policy which should induce every man who discusses this subject to be very careful about his facts and to withhold his criticisms until he has been able to make a thorough and conscientious study of the question . . ."

The very same day of the Roxas speech before Rotary, another assist came unexpectedly from a legislator. The *Bulletin* ran a front-page interview given by the assemblyman from Pangasinan, Eugenio Perez (who was to become speaker of the house in the postwar Congress), in which, as the *Bulletin* put it, Perez "vigorously defended" the NARIC. Perez went further by saying "the country has reason to feel grateful to the NARIC for the reasonable price levels which have been maintained since its establishment more than a year ago."

"The *Bulletin*," said Perez, "branded recent criticisms against the NARIC as narrow and obviously induced by regional or selfish class interests."

Meanwhile, President Quezon acted swiftly on the petition of the sugar bloc assemblyman for an investigation of the NARIC. He directed the chairman of the National Economic Council to name an ad hoc committee to conduct an investigation.

Secretary Roxas thereupon appointed Secretary Mariano Jesus Cuenco of Public Works and Communications to head the committee with the following as members: Agriculture and Commerce Secretary Eulogio Rodriguez, Labor Secretary Ramon Torres, Finance Secretary Antonio de las Alas and

Dean Bienvenido Gonzales of the U.P. College of Agriculture.

The committee made a thorough inquiry and fortwith submitted a report to the NEC. Its findings: there was no basis for the allegation that the NARIC price was unduly high.

On 6 September 1938, President Quezon himself presided over the meeting of the NEC to consider the report of the Cuenco committee. That same afternoon President Quezon issued the following statement:

I have considered the report submitted by the Committee created by the National Economic Council to investigate the causes of the prevailing price of rice, and I have discussed this report with the National Economic Council.

According to the report of the Committee, the prevailing price of rice is not exhorbitant, and it appears that the NARIC has good reasons for setting the cost of rice at the price at which the NARIC is now selling it. I have come to the conclusion that I should not be justified in interferring with the decision of the Board of Directors of the NARIC in this matter, and I do not intend to do so. I am satisfied that the Board has a very difficult problem at hand; that it has been carrying out its duties in accordance with the purpose of the executive order which created this Company, and that it deserves not only the support of the Government but also recognition equally of producers and consumers for the work that it has done. This matter, as far as I am concerned, is settled, and I feel that the Board of Directors of the NARIC should be allowed to continue managing the affairs of the Corporation without interference on my part, unless it can be shown that it has abused its discretion. No evidence to this effect has been submitted to me.

THE REMARKABLE THING about the NARIC was that it not only managed to stabilize the selling price of rice for consumers and the buying price of palay to producers but

that it managed to expand its operations and even went into research without asking for additional funding. Originally, the capital allocated to the NARIC was P4,000,000. Only half of that was actually made available to the Corporation and out of this initial outlay, it generated sufficient income to establish its own milling and warehousing facilities in Cabanatuan and other key areas, repay its capital loan within two years and conduct some basic researches.

NARIC had the good fortune of having for its researcher a brilliant scientist, Dr. Salvador B. Oliveros, who, by 1939, had developed processes in his laboratory for the conversion of rice straw, rice hull and other wastes into industrial products. His researches included the conversion of rice straw and hull into hardboard for building construction; the production of rice oil from tiki-tiki, and the production of rice paste from ground rice.

Our researchers also conducted continuing experiments on the best means of preserving our rice stock in the warehouses. Various experiments were conducted on the most effective ways of fumigation. The researchers even developed a portable fumigation chamber made completely of locally available materials.

THE NARIC WAS plugging along at high gear when Hitler started World War II in September of 1939. From that moment on, the entire perspective of the Corporation changed. The initial impact on the Philippines of the war in Europe was a flurry of hoarding of foodstuffs and we at the NARIC concentrated our efforts on preventing any undue increase in the price of rice due to this hoarding spree.

There was only one way out: to keep sufficient stock of rice in all our distribution centers. Over the strong protests of rice producers who contended that they could have earned much more if the NARIC had permitted the free market to operate, we were able to stabilize the price at ₱6.40 per cavan — not a cent more than the price before Hitler started shooting.

We were pleased to note that while the price of most foodstuffs rose from 10 to 30 per cent within the month after the outbreak of hostilities in Europe, NARIC was able steadfastly to hold its price line throughout the ensuing months of deepening war scare.

29

ON BEING FIRM — BUT FAIR

I value most the affection of my family, the esteem of my friends, the loyalty of my colleagues.

I AM TOLD I had built a reputation for being a martinet, a slave driver, a despot. I am not surprised. It just was not in my nature to allow slovenliness in the way my fellow workers dress, nor did I stand for sloppiness in doing a job. I've always thought being neat of attire was a virtue. And I believed that as long as one had to exert any effort doing a job, he might as well do it well.

Early on at the NARIC, I noticed that a few fellows were developing the habit of punching their cards way late. I thought of a cure. I came in before eight one morning and positioned myself where I could see everyone punch the bundy clock but where I could not be seen. After 8:15 I collected the time cards of those who had not shown up. When they arrived, they had to come to my office to pick up their cards. I handed each card myself. I looked at each sternly but did not say a word. That kept them guessing how I really felt.

Tardiness became mighty scarce after that.

All clerical employees were coats in those days. I saw to it that everyone had a locker nearby. Anyone who hung his coat on the back of his chair or who cluttered his desk with stuff that should be kept in the lockers got dagger stares from me. No one that I recall got caught being so sloppy a second time.

One day a number of employees were playing ping-pong down the corridor during lunch break. I was on the way out when I saw one of the players spit down the corner after a hard rally. I stopped the game and, without my telling him, he nervously looked in vain for a handy waste paper to wipe his saliva off the pavement. He was so panicked that he pulled his handkerchief and wiped his saliva off the floor with it. After that incident, it became plain to one and all that spitting anywhere in the premises was a federal offense.

One time, I suspected a fellow was often playing hookey. During a break period I thought of inspecting his desk. When I pulled his middle drawer, sure enough there were comic books in it. I sealed the drawer with a tape across which I signed my name so he could not open his drawer without breaking the tape. The word spread throughout the office that I had made it a routine to make spot checks of their drawers. I was told that after that incident, few if any employees dared bring any item that might divert their attention from official business.

In defense, let me say I was firm, yes; but I tried at all times to be as fair toward my men as it was humanly possible to be so. I do not know of any case throughout the 30-odd years I was in the government service where any subordinate

left me due to oppression or injustice. I was hard on slackers, but I always went out of the way to recognize merit.

In times of common peril, as during the period of Japanese occupation, I staked my own life protecting my men.

To this day a few of those with whom I worked in the past tell me that they were later to appreciate the discipline and drive that I hoisted on them. One day recently, I had a chat with Mr. Marcelo Balatbat who had risen from an obscure clerk at the NARIC to the managership of the National Marketing Corporation (NAMARCO) and, still later, to a couple of positions in the Cabinet.

"You know, Doctor," Liloy Balatbat told me, "if I made good at all in any position I held, it was because I learned a lot of administrative know-how from you."

I HAVE COME to a point in life where I feel that the Good Lord had been, on the whole, kind and generous to me. But I say here and now that what I consider most priceless is that indescribable feeling of deep esteem that a number of my colleagues and friends seem to hold for me. And perhaps that's because our feeling toward one another is mutual.

Take my good friend, Dan Salvador, for instance. I first met him when he was a swimming coach at San Beda College. I was very interested in learning how to swim the correct way and he was such a good teacher that I became one of his cronies who took to the San Beda pool almost daily for years in the early thirties.

When I joined the NARIC, I asked him to work with me as my confidential assistant. Rice was such a tempting com-

modity that I had to have someone I could trust to prevent pilferage. My seeing eye at the NARIC was Dan.

When the Japanese occupation came, we became even closer to one another in the face of common danger. He knew I was in constant danger of being seized by the Japanese the way I was standing up to them in defense of my men.

The day I was told to go to Fort Santiago, Dan tagged along. But he had to stay outside when I went into the off-limits area. All my friends thought I was going to be detained, especially Dan. As it turned out, I was one of several government functionaries invited to visit the dungeons. The Japanese wanted to impress us, vainly of course, that Filipino detainees were being treated humanely in the Fort.

When, late in the afternoon, we finally emerged from the Fort, who should be still there outside, waiting for me all that time but my good friend Dan Salvador. He never left the place, he told me, not even for lunch. And all that time he was planning in his mind how he would go after the Japanese who summoned me to the Fort in case I was harmed or killed.

Dan had since gone a long way, having had some luck in developing a subdivision out in the suburbs, but to this day he still frequently sees me for a quiet chat.

And as for loyalty, two of my assistants, Tomas Valdezco and Roberto Yumul who are still with me today, have been with me about 40 years. They are capable fellows who, I am sure, could easily have found jobs that would pay them much more than I can ever afford. They had both gone through the regimen of discipline and hard work that I had followed as an article of faith all throughout my career.

I don't know what makes them stick to me so. I only know that deep in my heart, I feel the sense of attachment to them that I always feel for the many folks whom I hold in high esteem.

These I value most of all: the affection of my family, the esteem of my friends and the loyalty of many colleagues, which I hope I do return in full measure.

30

MY BULLET WAS A DUD!

"Stick to your post and feed the people," was President Quezon's final order to me.

FOR A WHILE, there was a deceptive lull in the fighting in Europe after Hitler's initial thrust into Czechoslovakia in September of 1939. But we in the Philippines had a foreboding that one day soon we would be involved in the war. This was because of the creeping Japanese inroads into the Asia mainland, first in Manchuria, then in China proper. The papers carried daily reports of Japan's frenzied preparations for further invasions expected to be launched momentarily against Indo-China and Thailand, the rice granary of the continent.

President Quezon lost no time preparing the civilian population for any emergency. And since the feeding of the population was central to any such preparation, we at the NARIC were involved in this preparatory work right from the start.

President Quezon's first move was to set up some sort of a government machinery that would control the price of prime commodities. Thus, he created the Civilian Emer-

gency Administration (CEA). I was named to its technical committee with the specific assignment to develop a price control program on rice.

The technical committee held its first several meetings at my conference room in the NARIC and our staff assisted in preparing the first schedule of prices which was included in President Quezon's price-fixing Executive Order No. 233, dated 8 November 1939.

For his part, U.S. High Commissioner Francis B. Sayre proposed a multi-national Civilian Emergency Planning Board intended to lay out a long-range plan for civilian mobilization in case of war. I was made a member of the committee on food supply. This committee was given the job of accumulating data and other information on food resources, such as rice, fresh and canned fish, livestock, poultry and vegetables.

While we were, on the whole, fairly successful in stabilizing the price of rice throughout this emergency, the price of other foodstuffs and other essential goods climbed as much as 30 per cent. For this reason, President Quezon on 16 January 1940 created the National Trading Corporation. I was named member of the board of this corporation presumably so I could contribute ideas on price stabilization which we were able to maintain in the case of rice.

President Quezon's order creating the NTC specified that this corporation must "prevent the scarcity, monopolization, hoarding, injurious speculations, manipulations, private controls and profiteering affecting the supply, distribution and movements of foods, clothing, fuel, fertilizers, chemicals, building materials, implements, machinery and equipment required in agriculture and industry, and other articles or

commodities of prime necessity, both imported and locally produced or manufactured for the protection of the public."

WHEN HITLER OVERRAN the Low Countries and France and started bombarding England late in 1940, it was felt that the United States would sooner than later be drawn into the fighting. With the successes of the German blitzkrieg, the Japanese threat loomed larger and total preparedness, both military and civilian, was decreed by President Quezon.

The mobilization of the military reserves began. My son, Felipe III, reported for duty as a lieutenant. I had, myself, been commissioned as major in the reserves, having taken up a crash military course along with a number of top leaders, including Speaker Roxas, in the ROSS (Reserve Officers Service School), but my work in the rice agency was deemed more important and I was not called to active military duty.

For total civilian mobilization, President Quezon on 1 April 1941 issued Executive Order No. 335 creating the Civilian Emergency Administration. Headed by Secretary Teofilo Sison, the CEA was given virtual dictatorial powers to protect the civilian population for the duration.

The CEA was directed to establish an all encompassing machinery to meet all possible contingencies.

The evacuation of civilians from danger zones was to be handled by the Philippine Red Cross under Mr. C. H. Foster. The domestic production of essential commodities was to be managed by the Industrial Production Administrator, Mr. Gregorio Anonas of the National Development Company. The control of fuel and transportation was assigned to Col. Henry Gilhouser, head of an oil firm. Mr. Alfredo Eugenio

was named national air raid warden. Medical and sanitary services were to be managed by Dr. Hilario Lara of the Department of Health and Welfare. Director Felipe Cuaderno of Communications was charged with the job of preparing facilities for emergency communications throughout the country. Dr. Camilo Osias was named publicity and propaganda chief.

I was named food administrator.

Immediately upon assuming this job, I asked President Quezon to issue a series of Executive Orders which I considered urgently necessary for the accomplishment of my mission.

One of the first such decrees was Executive Order No. 340 issued in April, 1941, requiring all persons and entities dealing in foodstuffs to submit to the food administrator a monthly inventory of their stock.

My purpose was to determine the items of essential foodstuffs that must be purchased as soon as possible so that the country can have at least a six-month reserve of food.

Going over my papers, I noted that I asked the National Emergency Commission to take steps immediately to import all the wheat flour we could purchase as I had a feeling that there will be no more bottoms available "before the end of the year." (As you will recall, old hell broke loose 22 days before the end of that year.)

It was a tough job compiling a nationwide food inventory as, of course, once stock had gone to provincial distributors, it was not easy to make a physical inventory among small dealers who were afraid their stock might be confiscated.

But the big importing firms in Manila, mostly foreign-owned, were cooperative. By August, we were firing orders

by cable through Ambassador Elizalde in Washington for milk products and corned beef — two common food items in critically short supply. Our survey showed we had sufficient stock of sardines, salmon, pork and beans and other canned goods for at least six months.

WHILE OUR VICTORY garden drive was nationwide in scope, we paid particular attention to the provinces chosen as evacuation centers, namely, Rizal, Laguna and Tayabas (now Quezon).

We wanted to make sure that in the evacuation towns the people were especially trained to share their homes and their resources with thousands of evacuees from metropolitan Manila. In these towns, we intensified our drive for food production and conservation.

We thought everything was moving along smoothly when, on 18 August 1941 the *Manila Daily Bulletin* ran a story on an inspection trip made by a party headed by High Commissioner Francis B. Sayre. The story said that while the Red Cross was found to be on the job preparing accommodations for prospective evacuees at Pagsanjan, Laguna, Mr. Sayre failed to note any activity along the line of emergency food production.

I was alarmed. I knew something was wrong because I had monitored the progress of our work in the evacuation centers very closely and the reports of our field men were in fact impressive.

I had the *Bulletin* story checked and sure enough, I found out that the Sayre party made the trip without alerting anyone from us or from the Bureau of Plant Industry. The Red Cross people, who promoted the trip, just did not

have any information as to the location of the cooperative and home farms that our field men and the local people had been cultivating as emergency gardens.

I did not bother to deny the *Bulletin* version. Instead, I organized an inspection trip to which I invited Mr. Sayre and both the foreign and local press.

What transpired during this inspection trip was well covered in a press statement issued after the trip by Mr. Claude A. Buss, a member of Sayre's staff who represented the High Commissioner. Excerpts:

It was a distinct pleasure to participate in the food campaign inspection trip to evacuation towns of Rizal. Dr. Victor Buencamino, Director Hilarion S. Silayan and their able co-workers deserve praise and credit for the program of production which is based on agricultural experiment stations, provincial and municipal nurseries and home lot cooperators . . .

Not only are Dr. Buencamino and his helpers rushing in terms of the present emergency use, but of the long range program for seed distribution, diet enrichment and rural improvement. The Bureau of Plant Industry has 1,432 field workers in these vital enterprises and they are carrying on Herculean efforts in spite of their limited budget allowances.

They are planting pulses, legumes and root crops in lots which were previously idle and an uninitiated might easily pass right by their lots without realizing their newly-discovered utility.

There are difficulties of rains, floods, droughts and pests, but they are not preventing hundreds of individual householders from contributing to the relief of the present emergency by planting their own humble bits.

The spirit of the people was wonderful. We saw doctors, dentists and teachers at work in their own personal plots and I believe that they will inspire and encourage their neighbors with their examples.

I am sure that Mr. Dunn of the Columbia Broadcasting System, Mr. Forster of the Red Cross and the newspapermen who accom-

panied us are equally impressed with our fruitful day in touring Rizal . . ."

IT WAS FORTUNATE that when the Japanese invaded Luzon, General MacArthur decided to declare Manila an Open City. There was therefore no necessity for evacuating the civilian population of Manila.

But if it had become necessary to carry out the evacuation plans, the food situation would not have been too disastrous at least during the first six months or so. As it turned out, most of the people out in the provinces carried on with their home food production practices as a measure of survival throughout the war. It might be said that the work of the Food Administration during the hectic months prior to the outbreak of the war somehow helped prepare the mind of the people for the ordeal that was to come.

My last available progress report on the food crops production campaign, dated 20 October, 1941, showed that after 12 weeks of campaign throughout the nation, we had served a total of 55,197 farmers who were served with seeds and planting materials. We concentrated on the distribution of selected palay seeds which we loaned to farmers on condition that the same quantity of seeds be returned to the CEA seed bank at harvest time.

My last report showed that at that point in October, we had distributed 23,252 cavans which were planted on more than 21,000 hectares of rice farms. On other food crops, we distributed 668,726 gabi tubers; 2,086,013 pieces of cassava; 1,139,710 cuts of camote; 56,272 kilos of beans; and 3,598 kilos of assorted vegetable seeds.

These were distributed mostly through provincial agricultural extension stations.

"Make Every Home an Arsenal of Food," was our battle cry. Victory gardens and poultry sprouted in every backyard. People learned how to salt and dry fish and meat. It was a campaign for survival and the people went for it in a big way.

At the NARIC, our immediate target was to stock at least a four-month's supply of rice. We were confident that in case of attack, the combined USAFFE forces would repel the invaders in four months or less.

THE CEA HAD BARELY gotten organized when the Japanese struck at Pearl Harbor in the early morning hours (Manila Time) of Monday 8 December 1941. By daylight, word reached Manila that Japanese planes had raided a number of military targets on Luzon. (The news was not published then, but we learned later that the U.S. airfighters were caught flat-footed at Clark Field and the entire U.S. air squadron was virtually wiped out.)

The CEA plan automatically became operational. Air raid sirens warned the Manila populace of the approach of Japanese planes. Blackout regulations were rigidly enforced at night. I was among those summoned by President Quezon to an emergency meeting at his Marikina compound where he was giving last-minute instructions before joining General MacArthur at Corregidor.

"Victor," said the President, "be sure you make rice available to all the people, rich and poor alike. No discrimination whatsoever. Stick to your post and feed the people."

That was the last time I saw the President.

And meanwhile, the Japanese had landed at Lingayen, Atimonan and Legaspi and we heard the best our forces could offer was a semblance of some rear guard action. What happened to the Flying Fortresses that only the previous week were seen daily engaged in war maneuvers over the Manila area? Japanese bombing squadrons appeared almost daily during the first week of the war and we did not see even one American plane challenge them!

Just before Christmas Eve, Manila was declared an Open City. We took it to mean the capital was to be abandoned to the enemy. We learned later that our forces retreated to the Bataan peninsula to make their last stand there.

Before withdrawing, the U.S. military authorities opened the cold stores and warehouses all over Manila and at the piers and allowed, even encouraged, the people to help themselves rather than leave the provisions to the Japanese. A weeklong orgy of looting began.

In the midst of the confusion, I stuck to the job and asked my personnel to stay with me. But day by day, less and less employees showed up. Just the same, we kept the NARIC office open. We suspended distribution of rice, but in my mind, I was working out some rationing plans which I knew had to be enforced sooner or later.

Reports reached me just before New Year's Eve that attempts had been made by mobs to ransack our branch warehouses. I asked for police protection, but neither Mayor Juan Nolasco nor Police Chief Antonio Torres could provide more than token guards. There were rice and food riots all over the city. Order had broken down completely.

THAT FRIDAY AFTERNOON, January 2, the Japanese were reported approaching Manila from the North Road. There was an unusually large mob hollering for rice outside the NARIC gates, obviously trying to lay their hands on our rice supply at the main office warehouse before the Japanese could arrive.

There were only two unarmed guards in front of the warehouse. I stood in front of the warehouse door, facing the mob who were then trying to force the gate open. "Rice! Rice!" they shouted.

I had no time to think. In the spur of the moment, I drew my .45-caliber pistol and hollered to the rioters that anyone who crossed the gate would get shot!

For one tense minute, I braced myself for an attack by the mob. I was aware I could die on the spot, but somehow I was resigned.

Miracle! No one crossed the gate!

That evening, I wrote in my diary a full account of the incident. Of the climactic moment, I wrote:

My heart began to beat fast. I had placed my life in peril, but that was the only step to take under the desperate circumstances. If I had given in to the unreasonable clamor of that mob of looters, Manilans would have no rice. Fortunately, no one in the crowd dared . . .

I then handed my gun to the policeman with orders loud enough for all to hear: 'Shoot anybody who crosses that line, officer!' And to emphasize my point, I cocked the gun and fired in the air. There was a faint click. The bullet was a dud!

While I was writing, the sirens blared. In the faint light of my draped room, I continued writing.

I hear the roar of many planes. They will probably bomb Bataan again. I think I will pray . . .

I was too excited to sleep that Friday night even after the all-clear signal. The Japanese had begun to enter the city. By midnight, I started scribbling again in my diary:

Can't sleep. Worried about the safety of my son. Worried about the rice rioting and the looting that had gripped the people. Worried about the Japanese. Yes, they entered quite peacefully but you can never tell what they are up to . . . I can hear the trample of marching feet with heavy shoes. It must be a battalion. The Japs prefer to move at night. What is it that they are singing? It is a strange, weird hymn.

Only last night I could still hear the boogie-woogie music from the San Juan cabaret at a distance . . .

The Japanese occupation of Manila had begun.

31

THE HELL HOLE THAT WAS BATAAN

"The whole of humanity was watching us — ours was a glorious stand . . ."

I WOULD SAY THAT for all the ups and downs that I have experienced throughout my 88 years, I have on the average been privileged to enjoy a fair share of the good and happy life. And if what they say is true that one must learn to take pains and sorrows along with his joys, then I can say I had had my share of pains and sorrows, too. Only it was written in the stars that the anguish in my family should revolve around my eldest son, Felipe the Third.

It makes me feel proud that we had in Philip an authentic patriot who risked his life in the service of his country. Just out of law school at 21, Philip was one of the young volunteers who felt it was their supreme duty to come to the defense of their homeland when the Japanese attacked the Philippines.

At first detailed with the 51st Division on the southern front, Philip was one of the countless heroes who retreated to Bataan, had had close shaves dodging bombs and bullets

during the futile defense of that peninsula, and miraculously survived the Death March and the hellhole that was the Capas concentration camp.

Philip loved to write and it is fortunate that he had kept a diary from which I shall lift copious excerpts. It tells of the ordeal he and his buddies went through throughout and after the fighting. Those of us who stayed behind cannot run through his diary and fail to feel a sense of guilt that we did not share a little more of their suffering.

Philip had gone through the paces quite typical of most young men of his age from middle class families. High school at La Salle; law school at the Ateneo and finally the Bar. It was at the Ateneo where he fell in the company of such bright and idealistic young people as Raul Manglapus and Leon Ma. Guerrero. Philip had distinguished himself in debates and oratory. It was either Manglapus or Philip who ran away with the medals in those forensic bouts.

Philip really did not have to work his way through school, but even as a student he got himself a job as beat reporter on the *Manila Daily Bulletin.* On the side, he wrote feature articles and one of his noteworthy journalistic efforts was a polemic with Leony Guerrero which ran through several issues in the *Philippines Free Press.*

One day I had a tiff with him. Without my knowing about it in advance, he took part in a radio skit which the Ateneo fathers were promoting. The idea of the skit was to prove that Jose Rizal abnegated Masonry just before his execution.

That night I had a good talk with Philip. I told him I had been for years a Mason and so was his grandfather before me. In fact at one time my father Felipe the First

was the grandmaster of the whole fraternity throughout the Philippines.

I told Philip perhaps his grandfather would turn in his grave if he learned that his first grandson was taking part in a campaign to discredit a world-wide fraternal order that, through most of its history, had been a bulwark of liberal thinking against the then prevailing excesses of the clergy.

Philip recognized his obligation to respect family loyalty and he forthwith withdrew from the radio show. But he remained a staunch Catholic, and, as his diary later showed, he attributed his escape from death in the fighting to his prayers and his steadfast Catholic faith.

I had said earlier that I do not attend Mass. But I did admit that I say my prayers in my own way and I must now add that I never in my life prayed as hard as when Philip was away in the wars.

My wife and I are among the millions of parents throughout the world who had suffered extreme anxiety for their children in the battlefields. I shall not stop praying that man should one day do away with wars.

PHILIP WAS ASSIGNED aide de camp to General Simeon de Jesus, commander of the 51st Division. His diary started with an account of his Division's retreat, first from Silang, Cavite, then from Manila and finally to Bataan. He said his group spent New Year's Eve in disorderly retreat at San Fernando, but somehow they managed to regroup on Bataan the first week of January. At Limay, Philip experienced his first brush with death.

The evening of 6 January, 1942, he wrote the following entry in his diary:

Bataan
Limay Hospital

Helluva day. Almost died. Noontime and the sun was very hot. So I stood in the shade of a tall tree beside the municipal building of Limay. General de Jesus was standing at the entrance of the building, talking with Colonels Sevilla, Garcia and Caluyag. I was talking to Major Mascardo, former aide of President Quezon.

Suddenly, someone shouted: "Planes! Planes!

I saw the general run for his life. Instinctively I dived flat. In a second I heard the bombers diving towards us. I closed my eyes and prayed.

There was an eerie swishing of falling bombs. And more bombs. The earth trembled. My chest was compressed by the concussion. My ears hummed. More bombs.

Trees fell and a pall of smoke filled the entire area. The municipal building was on fire. I was covered with mud all over. I stood up slowly as the planes disappeared. I was shaking from head to foot. Everything around me was burning.

Two trucks loaded with troops were hit with incendiary bombs. I saw the mangled bodies of three officers and two drivers who had been playing dice under a mango tree. The dice were still in the hand of a chauffer.

I saw Fernando Poe, cinema star, running across the field with a soldier covered with blood on his shoulder. He was trying to rush the wounded man to a first-aid tent.

Tony Arieta was shouting for assistance. Three of his friends were hit and bleeding to death across the road.

Meanwhile, Mascardo's jitney caught fire. The tank exploded and the boxes of ammunition inside the car started to explode. I didn't know what to do or where to go. I just stood there, looking at everything blankly.

The chaplain asked me to accompany him to the truck that had been hit. None of the troops in it was alive. They sat there

in their seats like carbon statues, charred to death, their rifles beside them. They could not be identified except for names or initials scratched on their helmets.

Fred (now Chief Justice Fred Ruiz Castro of the Supreme Court) saw a helmet with his brother's name on it. He asked me to help him look for his brother's body, but it was impossible to identify who was who. I told him, "Maybe that's just a fellow with the same name, Fred". But he would'nt be consoled. He kept examining every corpse.

Under one of the trucks, I saw the body of an American boy. He was only partially burned, but a shrapnel had pierced his lungs.

Everything around me was burning and I could no longer stand the stench of roasting human flesh.

Under the school house, I saw my general crouched beside Major Monserrat. The General was wounded on the shoulder.

* * *

A COUPLE OF DAYS LATER, Philip had gone to Corregidor with General de Jesus who had been summoned to General MacArthur's command post to receive fresh instructions. De Jesus had just been named head of the Military Intelligence Service.

I am lifting excerpts from Philip's diary on his visit to the Rock because he gives us a firsthand account of how life was among the family of President Quezon and other big wheels during the critical time of their hiding at that fort. Here is Philip's account:

8 January 1942
Malinta Tunnel
Corregidor

Corregidor is a wreck. The docks have been bombed and rebombed. The chapel is partially destroyed and nothing remains but

the cross and the altar. The area round the Post Exchange has been levelled by fires due to incendiary bombs and the cinema house has been razed to the ground.

First person I saw this morning was Vice President Sergio Osmeña. He wore a white *cerrada* and black shoes. He looked thin, bored and worried. When he saw me he asked: "When did you arrive?" I said, "Just now sir, with General de Jesus and Major Lamberto Javalera".

The Vice President asked: "How is it in Bataan? Is it safe? I am thinking of going there. When is the best time?

I told the Vice President that the best time to cross the Bay would be either in the morning or late at night to avoid enemy raiders.

In the breakfast table, I saw Major Carlos P. Romulo, and Lt. Col. Manuel Nieto, aide to President Quezon. Romulo was growing a small mustache, a poor imitation of Adolf's. He was slightly thinner and his eyes showed lack of sleep.

Romulo said that he was sick and tired of the canned stuff in Corregidor and that he misses the 'pesa' and 'adobo' he used to eat at our home and with the Vasquez family.

He also told me that before he left for Corregidor he called up my dad and told him to take care of his family. "I wonder how they all are in Manila," he said.

Mr. Romulo was in the press section of MacArthur's staff under Col. Diller. I think he should be made the Chief of that section because he has the most experience in propaganda.

He told me he was busy censoring the news reports of the foreign correspondents in Bataan and Corregidor and writing the scripts for the Voice of Freedom everyday.

After breakfast, Col. Nieto brought me to the President's lateral. In one corner, I saw Mrs. Quezon seated on a bench between Dr. Cruz and Fr. Pacifico Ortiz, S.J. Mrs. Quezon embraced me and she wanted to know how I was and if life in Bataan was very hard because of the bombings. Fr. Ortiz who was my Logic professor in the Ateneo said: "I'm glad to see you, Phil."

Mrs. Quezon brought me to President Quezon. The President was wearing a white shirt and white riding pants, a striking contrast to the khaki of the soldiers in the Rock. He was carrying a short whip. He looked thin but smart and snappy. The President said that he was glad to see me fighting for my country. He said: "I was in Bataan too during the revolution as aide to Gen. Mascardo. I know every nook and corner of that place. I got malaria there too."

That was the first time I looked in the mirror since Silang. I guess I must have been very dirty because Ah Dong, the President's valet, asked me if I wanted to take a bath. The people in Corregidor are all very neatly dressed and their uniforms are well pressed. There is no dust, no fighting here in Corregidor. Chinese servants serve the officers during meal time. There are electric lights, fans and even refrigerators. I even noticed that the shoes of the officers here are shiny. In the main entrance to the tunnel, they even have a barber shop and near the hospital lateral is a library. In some of the empty tables, I saw several officers and nurses playing cards. Outside the tunnel, on the beaches overlooking Manila Bay, I noticed several lovebirds talking in whispers. There is no war here at Corregidor except for occasional bombardments at noontime. Japs are at present concentrating forces in Bataan. I suppose they'll attack this place afterwards..

Next person I saw was Baby. She was wearing blue slacks and it made her look sleek. "I thought you remained in Manila," she said. Then came Nini. She was neatly fixed up, the usual pigtails and an ugly looking pimple on her nose. She said Miss Labrador, the nurse, woke her up and said I was around but that she thought it was just a joke. Both girls asked me to join them for breakfast and so I had a second breakfast. During breakfast, Agatona, Mrs. Quezon's maid, came along and she asked me to give a letter to her cousin in Bataan and she pinned a miraculous medal on me. Nini then gave a crucifix and Fr. Ortiz blessed it.

At about noontime, I walked with Nini to the hospital lateral. Then suddenly the lights went out. The tunnel walls began to shake. Japs were dropping 1000 pounders. Air inside the tunnel was pressing against the lungs. More bombs dropped. Detonation reverberates louder inside the tunnel than outside. Nurses started mumbling

prayers. Salvos of AA guns shook the cement under our feet. Then I saw a flashlight. It was Mrs. Quezon. She was looking for her children. Nini said: "We are here Mama." Mrs. Quezon was afraid Nini and Baby were out in the open and she felt relieved. There we were — Mrs. Quezon, Nini and I — cramped between soldiers and laborers who rushed inside the tunnel when the raid started. It was the equality of war. Then came the parade of the wounded. Filipino soldiers were rushed in on stretchers. There were cries of pain. Many were unconscious. I saw Fr. Ortiz giving blessings, hearing last confessions. He was here, there, everywhere. I saw an American whose leg was covered with blood being rushed to the medical department. Gen. Valdez, who is an expert surgeon, was busy assisting the wounded. The raid continued. I tried to remain cool even as the tunnel shook with the detonation of bombs and the firing of AA guns, but inside me I was getting afraid. I kept telling myself it is safer in the tunnel, not like in Bataan. But I guess fear is contagious and there is something about the tunnel that makes one feel asphyxiated.

After the raid, everybody started talking about the convoy. Officers were asking: "When will it arrive?" Some said: "By the end of the month." But Mr. Romulo whispered authoritatively that he had inside information "the convoy is very near and may be here in a week's time but keep that under your hat, psst."

It's ten o'clock now. I guess it's time to sleep. I can see Justice Abad Santos putting on his pajamas. Right now Vice President Sergio Osmeña is fixing his bed. I'm writing this on the upper deck and Fr. Ortiz is praying below me. He says it's time to go to bed.

January 9, 1942
Manila Bay
On Board Navy Courier Boat

Beautiful morning. Sun is slightly above horizon. Sea is calm. Cool morning air. All is quiet except for slow chugging of boat. Looks like a pleasant cruise.

Heard Mass said by Fr. Ortiz and received Communion. The President and family, Vice President Osmeña, Gen. Valdes, Sec. Abad

Santos and Col. Manuel Roxas all attended Mass. Mass was said in a small corridor between Fr. Ortiz's bed and the President's. Fr. Ortiz was slightly peeved because Nonong Quezon attended Mass in pajamas.

Had breakfast with President and daughters. The President was in good spirits. He said he was aware of the sacrifices the Filipino youth are now undergoing. "I am sure," he said, "they will come out of it gloriously."

The President recalled his last speech in the U.P. campus when he told the student body that it was very probable that in a very short time many of them would be fighting and dying.

I watched Gen. Douglas MacArthur taking his breakfast at the other table. He was not talking at all. He ate hurriedly and I don't think he even finished his coffee.

Breakfast even in Corregidor is rationed. We had a handful of oatmeal, one slice of bread, a little jam and a cup of chocolate. Nonong Quezon wanted more and I noticed Nini gave some of her own food to her kid brother. I had to hurry through the breakfast because the boat was about to leave.

* * *

January 21, 1942
Corregidor

President Manuel Quezon is sick again. He coughed many times while I talked to him. He was in bed when I submitted the report of the General regarding political movements in Manila. He did not read it.

The President looked pale. Marked change in his countenance since I last had breakfast with his family. The damp air of the tunnel and the poor food of Corregidor were evidently straining his health.

He asked me about conditions in Bataan — food, health of boys, intensity of fighting. He was thinking of the hardships being endured by the men in Bataan.

He also said he heard reports that some friction exists between Filipinos and Americans. "How true is that?"

The President's room was just a make-shift affair of six by five meters in one of the corridors of the tunnel. He was sharing the discomfort of the troops in Corregidor.

The President's stenographer said: "The Castila got sick again because he was wet in the rain." Quezon visited artillery men in coast batteries of the Rock and he personally distributed cigars to the boys. He was caught in the rain but he did not seek shelter.

Mrs. Quezon is slightly thinner. She says she cannot sleep well at night because her son who sleeps in the upper deck of her bed "moves too much."

Mrs. Quezon showed great concern over hardships suffered by the boys in Bataan. She said she was proud of the great stories of heroism of Filipino troops in Bataan. "The whole world," she said, "is talking about it."

Mrs. Quezon recounted how she and her family went to Corregidor, how they crossed Manila Bay and how an air road signal was sounded in the City when their boat left Manila.

Mrs. Quezon spends her time in the Rock reading, sewing, visiting some of the sick and praying. I think she prays most of the time. She is a very holy woman. Fr. Ortiz, the chaplain in the Rock, said: "I think she's a saint. I shall recommend her for cannonization."

* * *

PHILIP WAS RETAINED by General de Jesus as aide when the general assumed the job as chief of the intelligence service. In addition, he held a concurrent job as assistant planning and training officer under Colonel Torralba. Along with Captain Castro and Lieutenant Guerrero, Philip also served as staffer on the SYIM, a daily mimeographed newssheet for the troops on Bataan and Corregidor. SYIM meant "See You In Manila."

ON FEBRUARY 8, Philip headed a team of operatives sent by General de Jesus to gather information on what was happening in Manila. His group took a rowboat to the Cavite coast, hiked through the hills of Marigondon and took a bus to Manila.

He recounts in his diary that his unit included a signal crew who took along a portable transmitter. At one instance, a Japanese sentry started inspecting the bag of vegetables where elements of the transmitter were hidden. A couple of marksmen were on the ready from behind, poised to shoot it out if need be. Luckily, the sentry took only a cursory look at the bag and the operatives went through to a convent where the group was sheltered by the parish priest. (Which church, Philip did not mention in his diary.)

The Japanese had directional finders and Philip's signal men had to change the location of their transmitter every evening to avoid capture. The people he contacted for info were identified in his diary only by code numbers.

Philip's diary showed his group stayed in Manila up to 14 February but all the time he never gave us a call at home. He wrote on 13 February:

> Saw Dad in a small car driving to NARIC. He looked thin. I felt like crying. Homesick. Very tempted to sneak into the house.

One evening, one of his operatives sneaked into the studios of radio station DZRH through the fire escape and swiped a recording of the *Philippine National Anthem.* They needed one for use by the Voice of Freedom, the radio station that had been rigged up by our troops on Bataan. It seemed that only a recording of the *Star Spangled Banner* had been available there.

In his report to General de Jesus on actual conditions in Manila, Philip said he was "impressed at the calm in-

difference of Manilans to the Japanese occupation. This is due to their confidence that the USAFFE will soon return and kick out the Japs."

ON FEBRUARY 26, Philip made an interesting entry in his diary:

"Roxas and Romulo were talking about the fighting in Bataan and Roxas said that after the war, a big national shrine should be constructed on Mt. Samat to honor all the heroes who have died and are still dying in this battle."

(I consider this item noteworthy because the memorial is now a reality and this account by Philip establishes that this memorial was Roxas' original brain child.)

Philip also recounts how Roxas looked with disfavor at a broadcast over the Voice of Freedom which strongly hit the "Quislings collaborating with the Japanese while their sons are dying in Bataan." Romulo said this particular script was written by General MacArthur. But Roxas said this comment might have been unfair because "we do not know how much pressure the Japanese are exerting on those officials who were left behind in Manila."

Speaking of General Roxas, Philip made another historically interesting entry in his diary, dated 15 March 1942. He wrote:

Roxas will soon leave for Mindanao. When President Quezon left, he made Roxas virtual head of the Commonwealth Government in Bataan and Corregidor.

I read a personal, private letter of Quezon to Roxas written in the President own handwriting. He wrote that General MacArthur and he think very highly of Roxas and that he believes that some day Roxas will become the undisputed leader of the entire

Filipino nation. The President has authorized Roxas to sign for him at will.

(Four years later, Roxas was elected first President of the Independent Republic of the Philippines.)

The daily bombings and the mounting Japanese attacks on the Bataan front slowly began to tell on the defenders.

On 28 February, Philip wrote:

Non-stop bombing. Spent day jumping in and out of dugout. Hungry. A handful of "lugaw" is not enough. We are fed like chickens and we live like rats.

Quarrelled with Fred over the use of my towel. Silly thing. Guess we are all somewhat nervous. Nerves all on edge....

Bawled out by the General. He claims I don't keep his papers in good order. "What kind of an aide are you," he asked. Wrote him letter of resignation. Asked for assignment to the front. Fred and Leonie tried to stop me. They are good friends. I don't give a damn what the General does about my resignation. He makes me sick.

(Philip later noted in his diary that General de Jesus had rejected his resignation.)

PHILIP'S FIRST fire fight with the Japanese occurred on 4 March 1942 during a reconnaisance patrol in the Balanga area. His group of 10 patrols encountered a squad of some 30 Japanese troops. He wrote in his diary:

I emplaced my men behind a fallen log with a thick trunk. I could hear the Japanese officer shouting and his men shouted with him as they advanced.

Told my men not to fire until the enemy passed the other fallen tree before the log where we were emplaced. When they

climbed over the tree, Sgt. Sinculan fired with his Browning. Two fell . . .

When the Japanese crawled to our flank I told the men to retreat slowly behind the cogon patch, but I shouted loudly to mislead the Japs, "Attack, Men!" Everybody in my group shouted with me and fired as we retreated.

Then I felt something warm pierce my thigh, but I did not feel much pain. Sinculan and I were slightly wounded. After a while, the Japanese abandoned their pursuit.

I thought I would be nervous when face to face with the Japs, but now I know one had no time to be nervous during combat.

PHILIP GAVE VENT to his feelings on 6 March after listening to a pep talk on the Voice of Freedom right after a heavy enemy bombing which killed many. He wrote:

Listened to Voice of Freedom. Its words sounded hollow after terrific bombardment. When, when, when will the convoy arrive? Will it ever arrive? If it won't, then why don't they tell us? If it will, is it military secrecy that keeps them from telling us? Nope, it won't arrive anymore. They can't pass through the Jap blockade. They can't go beyond Macassar Strait. Roosevelt was not clear about helping us in his speech. Yes, it will arrive. America is such a great nation. Her factories have stopped building cars. Nothing but planes, planes, planes. They will darken the skies with their planes. The Japs will see. Hell, where are the planes? We are like rats here, running under the ground, living in dug-outs and fox-holes, bombed morning, afternoon and night and morning again. Where is the convoy? And what about the food? Sure, it's easy to say "keep on fighting" but can't fight without food in your stomach. Wasn't it Napoleon who said an army marches on its stomach? The boys in the front have been there for more than 60 days without replacement, without rest, without food, food, FOOD. Yes, Voice of Freedom, why don't you answer these questions? That's what we like to know. Words can't feed us. Words, words, words. Day by

day, more and more die. Die of sickness. Die of hunger. Die of bombs. Die of shells. Die of bullets. Die, Die, Die. This can't go on forever. We are human beings. Do you hear Voice of Freedom, "we are human beings." You can't keep on matching flesh againts steel! Oh, hell, what am I thinking about. Sure, help's coming. Roosevelt said so. America is not going to let us down. The eyes of the world are on us. The whole of humanity is watching us keep up the torch in this Orient that's fast getting enveloped in darkness. This is something worth dying for! Yes, I'm going to die. I am not going to see home anymore. Not going to see Mama, Papa and...hell! hell! hell! what am I thinking about...O Lord!

Raid again.

* * *

PHILIP RECORDED in his diary that he accompanied General de Jesus to what turned out to be a historic final meeting of all generals in Bataan the morning of 20 March 1942. It was here that Philip got the shocking information that defeat was inevitable. He wrote:

Impressive meeting of all Bataan generals held in the heart of one of the Bataan mountains. Wainwright, commander-in-chief, USFIP, presided. (USAFFE had been changed to US forces in the Philippines.)

The Commander-in-Chief announced that henceforth Bataan and Corregidor shall be separate commands. Wainwright will transfer his headquarters to Corregidor. Major General Edward King will be given command of Bataan.

Old General King was silent. Then he stood up and, with tears in his eyes said: "Somebody is angry with me in Washington. I am going to be given the honor of being the first American general in history to surrender the American flag.

No one spoke. The other generals just stared at one another.

Then the chief quartermaster officer spoke. He revealed that we had only so many more sacks of rice left after which there was

heaven to pay for rice. So many more tins of sardines and salmon for only a few more weeks. So many more shells for the 155s and 75s for just so many hours of firing per day. So many more cases of ammunition for infantry troops to last for just so many more days. "Gentlemen," he said dramatically and coldly, "we are at the end of our rope."

Nobody could speak. It was defeat staring the generals in the face and their reaction after more than 98 days and nights of ceaseless and courageous fighting against innumerable odds was — silence.

EVEN AS THE GENERALS were meeting, Philip recounted further, Japanese planes filled the sky with their metallic roar. Then an old general said: 'I am the oldest here. Let us take to the dug-outs. It would be a calamity if all the generals were to die with one bomb." The remaining days at Bataan were plain carnage. On 3 April, Philip wrote:

Japs pounding the front heavily, continuously, mercilessly. The boys are standing firm, fighting with the little strength left in their sick, hungry, weary, bloody bodies.

What is happening in Bataan today is phenomenal. Here are inexperienced youngsters — school boys, trainees, academy undergraduates — fighting enemy veterans of many campaigns who are numerically and materially superior...

Then this entry on April 6:

Saw troops of the 41st lying on the ground near Mariveles. Most of them were thin, emaciated, yellow with malaria. Many were dying. Others were blind due to vitamin deficiencies. Some did not have even the strength to drive the flies crawling on their bodies. When Japanese planes hovered above, they did not move. They did not care to move. Death would be a welcome respite....

From morning till sunset, the hillsides and the shell-burnt roads have been brown with bleeding men — the remnants of the Fil-

American forces. These are the men who have electrified the world with their glorious stand . . .

The afternoon of the 8th, General de Jesus held his final staff meeting. Philip quoted the General as saying, "we are in the saddest moment of our nation's history." "There were tears in our eyes," Philip noted. Then he wrote:

Prayed, prayed, prayed. Prayed for the dying and the dead. In the hour of defeat there is only prayer . . .

THE DAY BEFORE the surrender — 9 April 1942 — Philip made an entry in his diary about his friend, Oscar Arellano (who was to distinguish himself after the war as leader of Operation Botherhood, a Philippine Jaycees medical assistance project to help civilian war victims in Laos and Vietnam). Oscar had contacted Philip on the field telephone to ask for instructions as to where to take his retreating squad. "This is the end," Philip quoted Oscar as reporting from the front. Philip advised him to proceed to Mariveles where all Filipino troops were gathering for the surrender. "Good luck," Oscar shot back before hanging up, "if you see Ramon, tell the old fellow not to be nervous."

Philip then commented in his diary:

That was just like Oscar, still joking even at a serious moment. For all his carefree, devil-may-care attitude, we needed more men like him in Bataan. To begin with, he had no business volunteering. General Valdes told him he was a fool for leaving his wife and two-day old baby. But he did. And he told me one evening, 'Phil, if I don't ever get home, tell my kid why I fought. Tell him I wanted him to be able to tell the other boys his father fought for his country . . .

PHILIP RECALLED an incident just before the fall of Bataan involving some 20 Americans who apparently had decided to ignore General King's order for them to surrender.

They dug in on the side of a hill, mounted a couple of machineguns and started firing on anyone approaching them who did not look like Americans. At one instant, they started spraying machinegun shells into a group of Filipino troopers under General Vicente Lim.

When a Japanese reconnaisance plane hovered over them, the Americans chased the plane with machinegun fire. That was a big mistake. They gave away their position. In about 15 minutes, a flight of fighter-bombers raked their hill with bombs. And that, Philip recorded, might have been the very last piece of action in the Battle of Bataan.

The day General King surrendered the American flag as he had foreseen, Filipino troops were ordered to stack their guns and wait for the Japanese at Km. 182.2 near Mariveles. For Philip and many of his cronies whom he had not seen since the invasion in December, the hour of defeat became a grand reunion. Take Hector Unson, for example. Philip had heard he had been trapped by the Japanese and was killed during the retreat from Batangas. Funny thing was Hector had heard that Philip was killed during a raid at Corregidor. "It turned out that all this time Hector and I were praying for each other's soul," Philip wrote in his diary.

But for all the jubilation at seeing one another still alive, Philip and his cronies were more filled with anxiety. Besides Hector, there was fair-skinned Ernesto "Gatas" Santos who had an extra worry because the Japanese might take him for an American. There was Ramon Pamintuan,

and Johnnie Fabella, and Godo Reyes and Ernie Escaler and Tony Nieva, among many others.

Philip wrote:

It was a reunion alright, but a sad one. We had thought we would meet each other at some victory banquet in Manila, not in the night of defeat. But as it turned out, there we were, gathered on the dry bed of a Bataan stream, not knowing what the morning had in store for us. Would the Japanese free us? Imprison us? Kill us?

We discussed these questions throughout the night. I thought of trying to escape through the mountains of Bagac via Zambales. But they said: "Let's stick together . . . till the end.

We talked of our happy days in Manila. The way we used to run around town. To the Jai Alai, Casa Mañana, Manila Hotel, drinking, feasting, dancing . . .

I guess we were all changed men and we all agreed we didn't regret the experience. I don't think any of us was the worse for all the hardships we endured. They made men out of us. And above all, the gallant defense of Bataan put our country on the map. It was not all in vain . . .

Amid all the excitement and the turmoil, Philip did not forget one thing. He closed his diary that night with:

Today is April 9. I thought of Nini. It's her birthday.

That was a portentous thought. For about five years later, Maria Zeneida "Nini" Quezon became Philip's wife.

Philip wrote that when they woke up the following morning, April 10, a big white flag had been raised atop the highest hill. At about 11 o'clock that morning, the first batch of Japanese troops finally arrived and it was only then that they learned that General King had surrendered the previous day.

Philip recounted that one Japanese officer told them: "You are free because you are Filipinos." Then the Japanese ordered them to "walk up to Manila."

That marked the start of the infamous Death March.

32

MARCHERS IN A SNAKE PIT

I think my son was fated to suffer, just like a redeemer.

MUCH HAS BEEN written about the infamous Death March. I like to add to the record of this tragedy Philip's firsthand account. I believe his story adds some luster to the sacrifice of our heroes.

The Filipino soldiers were deceived. They were told they would be set free, but that they had to walk all the way to their homes in Manila. And so they walked, gladly, for the thought of a reunion with their families gave them strength.

Considering the punishment to which they had been subjected since the retreat to Bataan, it was nothing short of miraculous that so many of them, Philip included, managed to survive.

Bataan was bad enough. The Death March was hell. And at the concentration camp in Capas, the prisoners were resigned to die momentarily.

What goes on in your mind when you face such a calamity? Let us again lift from Philip's diary:

We walked together, Ramon, Tony Nieva, Ernie, Willie Jacinto, Paeng Estrada, Fred Castro, Johnnie Fabella and myself. We each carried a tin of Carnation milk and two tins of pork and beans . . .

We trudged on and on that first day for almost 15 kilometers. We were very thirsty. 'I can't anymore,' cried Willie as he dropped to the ground. He was begging for water. 'Even just a drop,' he said, but we had none. We rested for a little while and then I made him sling his arm over my shoulder. And we walked on . . .

Philip said right on that first day of the Death March, several Japanese soldiers started to take their watches, money, canned goods. Some of the fellows were even stripped of their shirts.

That first night Philip's group rested on a hillside. Philip said he was so exhausted "I slept like a dead man. No bed, no pillow, just a blanket which Ernie shared . . ."

Philip recalled that about midnight, Ernie woke him up.

"There were strange cries," Philip wrote. "There was the voice of a woman crying, pleading. Then there were other cries — female voices, too — and all had the same 'please - spare me' tone. We couldn't move. I was tense. Then there were hoarse cries . . . soldiers . . . then the shots that pierced the night . . . and the dull thud of bodies . . ."

The second day of the March, Philip's group reached Little Baguio in Bataan and they were mercifully allowed to stop by a stream where they gorged themselves with fresh water. Then they kept on walking till the noonday heat forced them to rest under a tree on the roadside.

Philip said that while resting, he saw a tiny girl about three years old, apparently abandoned. When he looked around, he saw in the bushes the body of a woman who had apparently been bayoneted in the belly. He presumed the woman was the child's mother.

Philip said he wanted to take the child with him, but he was himself too weak to carry anything. He placed the child on soft grass in the shade, hoping some civilians would pick her up. 'I can't forgive myself," Philip wrote. "The child haunted me . . ."

THE SUFFERING in the Death March became more unbearable by the third day.

"Everywhere victims of the catastrophe filled the roadside," Philip wrote. "Mobs of pitiful figures pleaded for food, begged for water. As we walked on and on, I saw more and more desperate looking faces . . . smoke-blackened faces . . . some had bandaged heads and limbs . . .

"Then Japanese soldiers would come and start kicking them and having fun at their expense. The guards would go through the motion of offering water and would then drop the container before the prisoner could reach for it . . .

"I kept praying while I walked . . . Ernie and Ramon were going crazy. Willie Jacinto kept asking for water at every step. He was getting on my nerves. 'Shut up!' I shouted at Willie. He did, and I cried.

When the marchers reached Limao, Philip's group rested in a shack by the road. Inside the shack they found a soldier who said he was a brother of Leocadio de Asis, an old friend of Philip's. His feet were bleeding and when it was time to walk again, he asked that he be left behind.

"It broke my heart to leave him behind," Philip wrote. "He tried to make it easy for us." 'Go ahead,' he said, 'if I were in your shoes, I'd leave you guys, too'."

"I kept looking back as we walked away. When we neared the bend of the road he waved at us one last time. My tears just rolled down. It was each man for himself. What has the war done to us?"

THAT AFTERNOON, Philip's group reach Orani, at the neck of Bataan peninsula. By that time, the Japanese started to count and search the prisoners. Then they were herded together with other prisoners at Balanga, in a spot Philip described as a "hell of a concentration camp."

"We were not given food nor water," Philip recounted. "The men were doing their necessities all over the place. Johnnie had to lay his blanket over somebody's manure. It was plain hell, but a Japanese again told us, 'You will go to Manila'."

"That was enough for me. I could and would endure anything as long as they bring me home where I can see Mama and Papa again. I think the same thought kept all of us alive. Maybe if I didn't have a nice home . . . I wouldn't have been able to walk on."

The fourth morning of the Death March, Philip was awakened by a Japanese guard with a butt of a rifle. Philip said a number of fellows were too exhausted to get up and rather than leave them to die slowly, the Japanese bayoneted them to instant death.

MEAN AS THE Japanese guards were to Filipino Death Marchers, they were unbelievably meaner yet to the straggling American prisoners. Philip wrote in his diary that

through most of the March he saw so many instances of Japanese guards heartlessly kicking and bayoneting the Americans who had fallen from sheer exhaustion.

One sight, Philip said, he could not get off his mind for days.

> There was a dreadful hole the size of a small well near Lubao, Pampanga. There, the bodies of American prisoners who had dropped to the ground because they were too weak to walk on were piled high. Others were bayoneted when they failed to stand up. Their legs could not lift their bodies anymore.
>
> Inside the well were snakes crawling over the bleeding bodies of the poor Americans. I noticed three or four fellows who were still alive...

In another instance, Philip said he saw an American major shout in desperation:

"Hell, you damn Japs, go ahead and kill me. Kill me! Kill me! I can't walk anymore. Kill me!

Philip said the Japanese guard accommodated the American major with a smashing blow with the butt of his gun that cracked the prisoner's cranium.

WHEN THEY reached Lubao, Philip's group ran into a kind Japanese sentry who allowed them to fill their canteens with water. Philip said he doubted if they could have stood the ordeal any further if this kind sentry had not allowed them to have some water.

Philip noted that when they reached Bacolor, Pampanga, the people were too scared to even greet the marchers. But most of them just stared at the walking ghosts, crying.

A woman approached the marchers looking for her son. She was stopped with a bayonet thrust.

Finally, San Fernando. About 6,000 of the marchers were jammed into a cockpit which normally held 900. They tried to sleep that night half-seated, half-standing. Philip developed a fever "probably around 40 but I felt like 50." "But I was determined to carry on. In moments like this, one must steel himself and muster his fighting spirit. I remember Papa's advice to me when I was on the high school swimming team at La Salle: 'Never give up. Fight to the last lap'."

The following morning, the prisoners were awakened with kicks and butt strokes and herded to the railway station where they were packed into baggage cars.

Of this train ride, Philip wrote:

Imagine about 80 of us dirty, sickly, sweating men locked in one of those iron baggage cars. There we were, struggling and groping for air. Many fainted. Some were moaning. Others suffocated. Some were trying to break the floors. Others thought they were dying.

The train chugged on ever so slowly. There I was, with two mutts on my stomach and my head between Godo Reyes' legs. But I didn't mind because there was a little hole and I could get a whiff of air. I could not help thinking: There are many wonderful things on earth — like the air we breathe — that we take for granted. That was the first time I realized the importance of fresh air.

At long last we arrived at Capas, Tarlac. When the door of the baggage car was opened, you ought to have seen how the boys breathed their first whiff of fresh air! You would have thought that was the last time they would breathe!

PHILIP RECORDED in his diary that the way the people of Capas reacted upon their arrival gave him a big lift.

"There were thousands of Tarlaqueños in the station," Philip wrote. "They all had tears in their eyes — all of them, men, women, children. They threw bread, rice, sugar, *panocha* — everything in the way of food. I could not hold my tears.

"They placed cans of drinking water every 200 meters of the road to the camp. They shouted 'heroes, Mabuhay!' The Japanese guards at first tried to drive the people away but they had to give up."

Surprise of surprises! When the Japanese guards saw they could not hold the people back, they decided to turn around and help the civilians give the prisoners some food! Philip said a Japanese handed him a *panocha* and pointed at a pretty girl from whom the *panocha* came.

"Here was real Filipino patriotism and kindness," Philip commented. "Our fight was not in vain, after all. I tried to control my tears because I did not like my buddies to see me crying. But when I looked around me I saw my fellow prisoners wiping off their tears, too."

FINALLY, Camp O'Donnell where, Philip said, "most of us were destined to die." Philip said he was assigned to Group II under General Fidel Segundo and he was made adjutant-general. His job was to report to the General how many died during the night. He said most of the prisoners, including himself, were suffering from malaria, dysentery or plain hunger. The first few days, the average mortality was from 300 to 400.

"There was a place called a hospital," Philip recounted. "It had absolutely no hospital facilities, no cotton, no medicine, not even water. Many fellows went insane there. Many of them could have been saved if they could have been given just a glass of water. It was really a morgue, a waiting shed where the sick were piled — there to die and be buried nearby. This is not a prison camp. This is a graveyard of living corpses . . ."

THOSE OF US left behind in Manila could only redouble our prayers for Philip's safety since the fall of Bataan. We kept receiving confusing, contradictory rumors. An old friend, former Congressman Gregorio Nieva, telephoned to say someone had seen his son Tony, a buddy of Philip's, being taken to the Bilibid Prisons and that maybe Philip was with Tony. My brother said he was told by a certain escaped captain that Philip was last seen embarking for Corregidor.

A rather cruel but well-intended letter came in the mails on April 14 from another old friend, Augusto Gonzales. It was a letter of condolence. He heard Philip had died.

But on the same day, we began receiving more concrete reports that Philip was alive. Joe Escaler, Jr. called up to report that he had just returned from San Fernando where he saw Philip along with thousands of other prisoners.

Then on April 16, Jorge de Leon, Jr., called up to report that, together with his uncle, PASUDECO Secretary Luis Dizon, he actually conversed with Philip at San Fernando and that Philip was feverish with malaria.

There was no more doubt that Philip was on the Death March but alive and all of us in the family were greatly

relieved. My first thought was to rush to Capas with some medicine. My friend, Dr. Antonio Vasquez, offered to accompany me to the concentration camp and he gave me a a bottle of quinine which, at that time, was worth its weight in gold. George Vargas offered me his car and one of his Japanese aides was willing to come along. But the Japanese supervisor-de-facto at the NARIC, Mr. Fukada, who had been trying to secure a pass for me, dissuaded me from going immediately. He said everything was a mess at the camp and it would take some time before the prisoners could be identified and located.

It was not until April 26 that I was finally able to proceed to Capas. Here are some excerpts from my diary of that date:

I arrived in Capas at one in the afternoon. In a small house there, I saw Dr. Agustin Liboro and Enrique Albert packing some medicines which they hoped to send to the prisoners, but they said they did not know how because they had been told that even the Red Cross and other relief organizations had not been permitted to bring in anything for the prisoners.

Oscar Jacinto accompanied me to the town convent where we met Fr. Marcos Punzal and Capas Mayor Victor Tizon. We were told that only the provincial governor, the mayor and the *teniente del barrio* were permitted to visit the camp. So I asked Mayor Tizon to take me to the camp.

We passed through a narrow, dusty road crossing the camp, on either side of which were temporary makeshift shelters, the Filipinos to our left and the Americans to our right.

We proceeded to the hospital where I hoped to see Philip since he was reported sick with malaria. He was not there. The men were piled on the bare floor without pillows or anything. No medicine. Very little food and water. A doctor told us mortality in the camp hit as high as a thousand a day.

We went from clusters of shelters to another. No. Nobody knew were Philip was.

For a while, we had to stop our car. There was a long line of stretchers being borne down the road. American prisoners stood at attention as the stretchers passed. We took off our hats. I counted 60. One soldier bearing a stretcher suddenly knelt and collapsed. He looked like he was dying, too.

By nightfall, we still had not found Philip. We had to leave, and I left my bundle of coffee, sugar and quinine with the mayor and asked him to please hand it personally to my son.

Outside the camp I saw thousands of mothers, fathers, relatives, friends trying to see their loved ones. But the sentries were strict. Their bayonets were fixed, their fingers ready on triggers. Guards armed with machineguns manned the makeshift lookout towers.

When I reached home, I told my wife and children how families were not allowed to see their loved ones, how even the Red Cross was stopped by stern armed guards.

To break our loneliness, I asked my daughter Neneng to tune in on the radio. A Filipino official was making a speech, praising the "magnanimity" of the Imperial Japanese Army!

About a month later, I tried once more to bring food and medicine to Philip at Capas, but again I failed to see him. Conditions were so bad by this time no civilian was allowed to enter the camp.

We were all resigned to the probability that we would receive word one day that Philip had gone. The word we kept getting was that at least half the prisoners had died and hundreds more were dying every day.

WE WERE the most surprised people, therefore, when one day in June of 1942, I got a telephone call at my NARIC office. The voice at the other end said Philip had been

brought to town and that I could go to the Harris Hall, an old missionary house on the corner of Taft and Isaac Peral, to fetch him.

I found Philip looking like a ghost. From more than 160 lbs. when the war broke out he was down to 90. He looked so delicate we were careful even in hugging him. At first we had to feed him by just a spoonful of semi-liquid food every so many hours, for the doctors said if he took in too much food all at once, his system might not be able to take it.

As he slowly recovered his health, Philip kept recounting to us the tragedy that was Bataan.

But Philip never learned his lesson. He kept tempting fate. When he was well enough, he seldom missed tuning in on the Voice of America broadcasts, often hiding himself under a blanket with his portable shortwave radio.

As soon as he was strong enough to walk, he got in touch with underground contacts. He joined the unit of Raul Manglapus, who had escaped from Muntinglupa.

When the Americans stormed into Santo Tomas he was among the first to greet them. His guerrilla unit served as operatives for the American liberation troops throughout the battle for Manila.

EVEN BEFORE the Philippine campaign was over, Philip and his cronies went back to newspapering. They started publishing the tabloid-size newsheet *Free Philippines*. As reporter on this liberation newspaper, he was accredited as war correspondent. But with the surrender of the Japanese

and the return of the old newspapers, the *Free Philippines* folded up.

About this time, the family of the late President Quezon had returned. The romance that had begun in the tunnels of Corregidor blossomed to full flowering and on 23 February 1947, Philip took Nini for a bride in what his cronies in the newspaper game described as "the biggest wedding since the war." The best man was Raul Manglapus and Baby Quezon the maid of honor, Doña Aurora and I stood as sponsors. Among the entourage were Chito Madrigal, Arsenio H. Lacson and Teodoro F. Valencia. It was predominantly a newspaper wedding.

After a while, Philip and his bride went to Rome where he served as third secretary at the Philippine Embassy. But they stayed abroad only eight months. Back home, Philip was serving as liaison officer between the Foreign Office and Malacañang when his mother-in-law, Doña Aurora, decided to visit Baler on the occasion of the unveiling of a historical marker at the site where the late President was born. Doña Aurora wanted to take her daughters along, but by this time Nini was heavy with child so Philip went along in Nini's place.

In the senseless massacre on April 28, 1949, perpetuated by dissident outlaws in a forested section of the mountain road, Doña Aurora, Baby, Philip and several others in the motor caravan perished, including Quezon City Mayor Ponciano Bernardo and the San Agustin brothers.

According to eye-witnesses, Philip was seriously wounded but still quite conscious when survivors tried to rush him to a hospital back in Cabanatuan. He was bleeding profusely. He pulled out from his pocket a rosary that he

had always carried with him and started to pray. Then, dipping a finger in a pool of his own blood, he scribbled on the glass window near him the words, "faith in God." He expired soon after that.

As I have said, it was written in the stars that Philip should be so ill-fated. But I like to think he had lived a full, exciting and meaningful life. Sometimes I think Philip was some sort of a redeemer. He seemed fated to suffer so those of us who loved him may live happily in recompense.

33

THE LURE OF THE UNIFORM

There almost was a father-and-son team on the infamous Death March.

YOU WILL RECALL that after my unimpressive record as soldier boy at the University of California following the big earthquake, I had sworn never again to don a military uniform. That was a vow I could not keep.

At the height of the first World War, Governor Francis Burton Harrison organized a unit of the U.S. National Guard of some 25,000 officers and men from among volunteers in the Philippines. The propaganda was effective. Posters with a photo-illustration showing Pvt. Tomas Claudio, the first Filipino to die on the European front, whipped up a strong feeling against the Germans and before long the National Guard unit was drilling daily on Wallace Field, all agog over the prospects of seeing action in Europe.

I was then a professor at the College of Veterinary Science at the University of the Philippines. The word went around that the National Guard could use veterinarians because the horses of the cavalry had to be cared for and the

cavalry was an important arm in the war. So I promptly volunteered. I discovered to my joy that being a vet was short cut to acquiring the rank of lieutenant colonel. Not only that. I did not have to sweat it out training like foot soldiers at Wallace Field. On certain days, I donned my flashy uniform. Somehow you felt important when you were in uniform. I was full of anticipation, for I saw this as a chance to visit Europe once more, all expenses paid.

But we never sailed. There were no bottoms available, and, moreover, the Germans soon surrendered. That ended my dream of becoming a member of the first Filipino expeditionary force to a foreign land.

IT TOOK ANOTHER 17 years before I donned another military uniform. I do not recall whose bright idea it was, but when President Quezon was to address the second anniversary celebration of the Commonwealth in 1937, a guard of honor was organized, composed of men on horseback, resplendent in their fancy military uniform.

The natural choice for guards of honor were members of the Los Tamaraos Polo Club. They were fine horsemen and all cronies of Quezon: the Elizalde brothers, (Mike, Juan, Angel, Manuel); Jake Zobel, Juan Nakpil, Jose Cajucom, Enrique Brias and Buencamino.

So there we were, all ten of us, flanking the limousine that brought the President all the way from Malacañang to the grandstand on the Luneta. President Quezon liked pomp, and so did we. No doubt the guards of honor added a martial touch to the show.

To me, the lure of the military uniform did not end with that colorful celebration. Among President Quezon's first official acts was the creation of a citizen army and it became a fad for everybody who was anybody to render military service. Big shots, from Speaker Roxas on down, attended the Reserve Officers Service School (ROSS) to get a commission. It was a status symbol to don an officer's uniform on such gala occasions as were attended by Douglas MacArthur upon whom President Quezon had conferred the rank to end all ranks: Field Marshal.

I joined the reserves, but for a more legitimate reason: a veterinary corps was being organized in the Philippine Army and I thought it my duty as a vet to sign up. The rank given me was actually a demotion: major. But I did not mind. I had a queer feeling during World War I that I did not quite rate the high rank of lieutenant colonel. This time I had a grand feeling of genuineness wearing a golden leaf on my shoulder.

WHEN THE PHILIPPINES was invaded by the Japanese in December of 1941, I reported for duty as a reserve officer in the Veterinary Corps. But at the final meeting which President Quezon called at his residence in Marikina, he gave me precise orders to stay put. Making rice available to the people was more important, he said.

One day recently, my wife Lolita was looking for a suitcase to use for a little trip and she asked our maid to pull out from the attic a number of suitcases that apparently had not been used for years. She found one she thought was the right size. When she opened this suitcase, she found a set

of a major's uniform, complete with a blanket, a trench coat and other accessories used on the fighting front.

I was reminded that at one point in the last war I was all set to move with the troops to the fighting front, but President Quezon told me to stay behind and distribute rice.

I don't think my son Philip ever knew that if his prospective father-in-law had not intervened, there might well have been a Buencamino father-and-son team on that infamous Death March.

34

HOW TO LOSE 40 POUNDS WITHOUT EVEN TRYING

A riceman hero is borne to his grave on a rice delivery truck.

IN THE CASE OF THE NARIC, I was completely wrong about my fears of the Japanese. I had presumed that the Japanese military would walk in during the very first hours of occupation and commander all the NARIC rice to feed their invading troops.

You won't believe it but for almost two years of occupation up to the minute I was reorganized out of the NARIC in 1943, not a grain of rice was taken by the Japanese military from any NARIC warehouse to feed the Japanese troops.

The Japanese were smart. They knew the civilian population had to be fed or their propaganda for what they called a Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere would fall flat. So they left the NARIC alone to feed the civilian population.

When the Japanese troops entered Manila, a few guards were immediately posted at the NARIC compound. They were

apparently detailed there to secure the area but without instructions to take over the administration of the agency.

So the first few days of the occupation, a handful of us diehards kept NARIC office open pending the Japanese take-over. Meanwhile I could feel the pressure of poor people demanding that rice be sold to them in the public markets.

Round about the third day, I consulted Secretary Jorge B. Vargas who had been designated head of the civilian government for Greater Manila. We agreed to contact the Japanese consulate to find out what the military intended to do about the rice problem.

The consul got us in touch with a liaison group of Japanese civilians who then worked out an emergency rice policy that was approved by the Japanese high command. The salient points of this policy were culled from a set of recommendations that I myself had prepared.

I recommended two sets of emergency distribution measures: one for priority institutions like hospitals and orphanages and another for the sale of rice in certain NARIC distribution centers until a general rationing plan could be worked out.

At the same time, we threshed out problems of permits and passes from the military for our vehicles within the Manila area.

The next problem was to work out with the military an arrangement to permit provincial suppliers to bring in their trucks and to provide them with fuel.

It was not until 12 January that a more or less permanent Japanese supervisor was assigned to the NARIC. He was Yoshio Noya, a civilian administrator attached to the army. His assistant was a Mr. S. Terada who spoke English well.

Japanese civilians were placed as heads of the various operating sections.

The minute the Japanese supervisors walked in, trouble began. One of the supervisors slapped a Filipino employee. I protested to Mr. Noya. I told him being slapped was the biggest insult to a Filipino and he must either control his men or I'll resign.

In the ensuing months, there were three or four slapping incidents. Each time I protested vigorously. Mr. Noya promised to do his best. I sent word down the line that any Filipino who got slapped must slap the Japanese right back. "If they take you to Fort Santiago, I'll go with you," I told my men.

That stopped the slapping business for sometime. I suppose my men took courage in my stand and most of them stuck to the job under the most trying circumstances. But at least half of the personnel chose not to report for work after a couple of months. I did not blame them.

THE MILITARY HAD ruled that listening to American broadcasts was a punishable act. But I kept listening in at night. So did many other men at the office. One of them was Casto C. Unson, one of the key sales officials at the National Trading Corporation who held office on the second floor within the NARIC compound. Every morning he came in with copies of newscast transcript around the various offices.

One day in February the Japanese military police picked up "CC", as we called him. We suspected that a lowly employee was a spy, who told on CC. I found out later that

he was the very first Filipino civilian incarcerated in Fort Santiago. (After the war, CC went into battery manufacturing and he is the leader in the field today.)

A couple of weeks later, my assistant manager, Victor Pagulayan, was also picked up. Like CC, "Pagu" was charged with distributing enemy news.

LET ME TELL YOU a little more about Pagu. He was the chap whom I mentioned earlier as my choice for assistant manager at the time we were organizing the NARIC. He had earned my complete trust and confidence when he was working with me as administrative officer at the Bureau of Animal Industry.

Pagu was a model public servant. When he had a job to do, he did it if it took him till midnight to finish the job. He was able, honest and completely dedicated. I had told many friends, and I'm saying again now, that whatever success I might have achieved as head of the NARIC, I owed primarily to good old Pagu.

One day I wrote a letter to the Fort Santiago authorities through Mr. Noya. I asked that CC and Pagu be released because they were good, useful men; that they had excellent records in the government service and that since they had been confined for about five months already, I felt that they had been sufficiently punished for an act which had really no adverse effect on the Japanese war effort.

In the case of Pagu, I went much further. I said I was prepared to guarantee Pagu's good conduct with my own life.

My wife Lolita could feel I was very much concerned about Pagu. One day, when she came home from church, she told me she prayed hard for his release. Then she gave me a medal of Sta. Teresita. "Please send this to Pagu," Lolita told me. I did.

I don't know if my letter or Lolita's prayers had anything to do with it, but it did not take long before both CC and Pagu were released. They told us of their harrowing experiences at the Fort. They said it was a miracle that they were still alive. Both came out so thin we could not recognize them.

The release of Pagu was a cause for great rejoicing at the office, so much loved was he by the entire staff. He was particularly loved by the NARIC personnel at Cabanatuan for he had gone there often to set up our buying program there and, later, to supervise the construction of our mill and warehouses.

Our people at Cabanatuan gave Pagu a grand welcome, complete with *lechonada*. That was a feat during the occupation period, when times were really hard. But to our folks at Cabanatuan, nothing was too good for Pagu on his first visit there after he had been given up for dead.

But Pagu was never quite well since his ordeal of about a year at the Fort. Doctors said after so long a stretch of imposed fasting in jail, he should not have so suddenly taken *lechon* and all that rich food at Cabanatuan. His digestive system could not take it. With each passing month, his health progressively deteriorated. I had left the NARIC towards the end of 1944, when Pagu had to be hospitalized with a bad case of hydrothorax (water in the chest cavity caused by stagnation of blood circulation). But I kept in touch.

One doctor prescribed goat's blood. I scoured the city for a goat myself and brought the animal to the Singian clinic where Pagu lay, dying. When he finally went, everyone who knew him, particularly the NARIC folks, took it very hard. My only thought was to give Pagu the best in death that he gave me in life. There was nothing much I could do, I told his wife, since it was wartime and I was out of a job, but if it was all the same to her, I would like to see Pagu buried in the Buencamino family plot at the Cementerio del Norte where my Lola Ninay and my own father and the rest of my forbears lay buried.

I think Mrs. Pagulayan appreciated my concern, but she politely declined my offer. By that time, there were no more funeral vehicles running as the *funerarias* had no fuel ration. And so we worked it out with people at the NARIC so we could sneak out one of its rice delivery trucks. I thought it was fitting that Riceman Pagu should be borne on a rice truck for a hearse just as a horse-drawn cavalry caisson bears a military hero to his grave.

To me, Pagu belonged to the roster of unsung heroes who really carried the load of nation-building at a critical stage in our history.

ALL THE TIME I was with the NARIC, I was under constant fear of being taken to Fort Santiago myself. While I tried hard to get along with the Japanese, I was aware that my stubborn defense of my men could put me in trouble with the invaders at any moment.

Within a month of the occupation, I had lost 40 pounds!

At the office, I was flanked on all sides by Japanese supervisors. And yet, every afternoon, before retiring, I'd pull out my little diary and scribble my thoughts. Any one page of this diary had sufficient sting to cause my incarceration.

I did one risky thing: I never locked any of my office drawers. And it worked! I was sure the Japanese searched all our desks, but when they found my drawers unlocked, they must have presumed that I had nothing subversive in them.

But one day I had a scare. Old Pio Duran, who believed in the Jap-sponsored Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, if there ever was one, called me up and said I was wanted at Fort Santiago at 11:30 a.m. on April 8th. This was just the day before the surrender of Bataan. Though the sad news did not break till the morning of the 10th, our morale was breaking fast with each report of Japanese advances on the peninsula.

I was worried. I could not tell Lolita I was wanted at the Fort.

The morning of April 8th, just before going to the Fort, I pulled out my diary and wrote:

10:30 a.m. Thinking of Lolita and the kids. In the face of grave affliction, a man's family is uppermost on his mind. He ceases to care about himself. He only thinks of his dear ones. He suddenly realizes that it is only for them that he lives.

Must stop writing. I've got to say goodbye to the boys. This silly sentimental crab will bore you no more . . .

Much later that night, I made the following entry in my diary:

11:00 p.m. Sorry, diary, the old bore is back again. No, he wasn't detained. He was just shocked. He was a victim of a twisted sense of humor.

It was not an investigation after all but an invitation. Why I was invited, I don't know. The others present were Dr. Antonio Sison, Messrs. Julio Francia, Pedro Aunario, Ramon Ordoveza, Pedro Vera, Bibiano Meer and Tomas Morato. Everyone was invited in the same fashion and for two days, they all imagined they'd be tortured in some dark cell. Morato arrived with sandwiches. "Just in case they lock me up," he said.

Col. Ohta and Major Nishimura, the heads of Fort Santiago, explained the reason for the invitation. "We want to show you that Fort Santiago is not a place of torture." We were taken around and shown the cell of Dr. Rizal. Games and exhibitions were performed before us. One Japanese officer, a Lieut. Koeki, took a bale of hay and hacked it into two parts with one swift stroke of his samurai sword.

We had quite a luncheon, too. And afterwards everybody was given a chance to speak. When my turn came, I told them what was uppermost in my mind. I was thinking of Pagulayan and Unson. I asked if something could be done to release them. But before I could say anything more, Major Nishimura raised his hands and said: "Not now, please."

So I kept quiet. I knew all this was a sham.

While we feasted above, men were groaning in the dungeons below. The food stuck in my throat and I felt cold. I guess everybody felt the same way too. . .

The following day, April 9th, the rumor spread thick and fast that Bataan had fallen. I did not believe it. I could not wait till I could hide in my cubicle at home to listen to the Voice of America.

I had only one line for April 10 in my diary: "Bataan has fallen!" I was too shocked to write anything more.

Then, this entry on April 11:

All Manila is quiet. Sad. I can feel the loneliness in the streets. A woman reading the *Tribune* in a newstand burst into tears. Her husband was a soldier. The boy who skates on the pavement near the entrance to my office was sitting on the sidewalk, dejected. His elder brother was a soldier.

Met Mrs. Gruet. Her eyes were red and swollen. Her son is also in Bataan.

Lolita was weeping the whole day. She asked Mrs. Vargas by phone if the news about Bataan was true and Mrs. Vargas could not speak clearly because she was crying, too. Her son is also in Bataan.

My barber inquired if I could ask the Japanese in my office what treatment the Filipino prisoners will receive. Will they be concentrated? Released? Killed? He was worried about his three sons. He gave them all to the Army.

The Japanese in the next house are singing, drinking, shouting.

In my house everything is quiet. I can hear my daughters mumbling their prayers. . .

Uppermost on our minds was my son, Philip. What has happened to him?

35

LISTED FOR LIQUIDATION

They did me a big favor when I was re-organized out of the NARIC.

THE PERIOD FROM the fall of Bataan till the abolition of the NARIC towards the end of 1943 was plain hell to me. I was caught in a mean vise.

On the one hand, I was determined to keep faith with President Quezon and with the people by doing an honest job of keeping the public supplied with rice. But then my sticking to the job meant working under the direction of the Japanese military administration. As later events showed, my sticking with the NARIC was understandably taken by the underground elements as an act of collaboration with the enemy. It turned out I was at one time high up on the list of those whom the guerrillas wanted to liquidate!

Then again, my sticking to the job was plain torture. I felt like a prisoner. At the NARIC office, I was hemmed in on all sides by Japanese "supervisors." I was called "manager" but the fact was that all policy decisions had to be cleared with the Japanese "supervisor-de-facto." This state

of things became so unbearable that I fired memos after memos asking for a delineation of my authority. I never got a satisfactory reply. And so I tendered my resignation. But I was told that if I insisted on resigning, the Japanese military would take it as a hostile act. The thought of winding up at Fort Santiago did not appeal to me.

Meanwhile, the supply situation was each day becoming more critical. It was bad enough that the NARIC was allotted a very limited number of vehicles and a stringent ration of fuel. The rice farmers for the most part produced only what they needed for themselves as the price that the NARIC offered for their palay never caught up with run-away inflation caused by the indiscriminate printing by the Japanese of their "mickey-mouse" money.

And as the war worsened, it became unsafe to purchase and distribute rice. NARIC warehouses were raided by the underground elements and the cash in vaults taken away. One day our provincial inspector for Bulacan, Mr. Julian Reyes, and our assistant cashier in Baliuag, Mr. Carlos Velasquez, were murdered in cold blood in broad daylight.

Before the grim message of this murder hit me, I went about my job quite unconcerned about my personal safety. And here again I was reminded of the intuitive feel for the pulse of the times of good old Amang Rodriguez. One morning, he came to the NARIC offices for a visit and he noted at once that my desk at the corner of the office was too exposed. "Better move your desk to where you won't be a handy target," the Amang told me. I appreciated his concern but somehow I stayed put.

Round about this time, Leonardo "Nardy" Siguion-Reyna was kidnapped by the guerrillas and when he reappeared about a month later, he confirmed that my brother

Philip and I were wanted by the guerrillas operating in the Sierra Madre mountains somewhere in Nueva Ecija.

LET ME PAUSE AWHILE at this point to tell you a side-story about Nardy Siguion-Reyna who is now the senior partner in the law offices of Siguion-Reyna, Montecillo and Ongsiaco. This firm is the successor to the law offices to which my good friend, the late Don Alfonso Ponce Enrile, had been connected.

Nardy started his law career as a lowly assistant to Don Alfonso, but he was so bright he eventually won the heart of Armida, the pretty and talented daughter of Don Alfonso. Armida has become famous in her own right for her classy and patriotic TV program "Aawitan Kita."

I am recounting my story of Nardy because it happened that I had a little coincidental part in the launching of his career. Nardy was the son of a former congressman from Pangasinan, who, being an honest politician, did not enrich himself while in office. As a consequence, Nardy had to support himself through college.

That was why he got himself a job at the NARIC. He started as an ordinary accounting clerk, but by the outbreak of the war, he had risen to a key job in the field services of our firm.

One day in August of 1942, Nardy disappeared when a guerrilla band raided the NARIC offices at San Miguel, Bulacan. Nardy had access to the company safe which the raiders looted. They walked away with some ₱5,000 of company cash.

When Nardy failed to appear after a couple of weeks, we gave him up for dead. On several other instances, our field men who resisted such raids were left dead.

About a month later, Nardy knocked at my door on Brixton Hill. Was I glad to see him! His story was an adventure thriller.

Sure enough, he was held up by the guerrillas and forced to guide them in a midnight raid to get the cash in the NARIC safe in San Miguel. The leader of the band was one Felipe Gonzales who said he knew Nardy to be a patriotic Filipino who would welcome a chance to join the underground.

Nardy said he was introduced to Captain Bernard Anderson, head of the famed Anderson guerrillas, who promptly appointed him first lieutenant in the "Luzon Guerrilla Army Forces, USAFFE." He was named finance and supply officer. (After the war, Anderson served as Vice President of the Philippine Air Lines until his retirement in the late 60s.)

Nardy soon became a handy man to Captain Anderson who entrusted him with the typing of some confidential reports. Nardy said these papers included a list of prominent people who had been marked by the guerrillas for liquidation.

Apropos this liquidation list, Nardy's written report to me went this way:

> Wanted by the guerrillas were four men with pictures, namely, Don Felipe Buencamino, Jr., Dr. Victor Buencamino, Don Luis de Leon, and Mr. Juan T. David . . .
>
> The charge against Don Felipe was that his place in Bitulok was used by the Japanese in invading the Philippines. (Not true)
>
> Dr. Buencamino was suspected of helping the Japanese because he is a brother of Don Felipe and because they alleged that he prevented

the looting of the NARIC warehouses in Manila so as to give the contents to the Japanese invaders. (Not true, either. The Japanese did not take any rice from the NARIC warehouses in Manila throughout the time I was at the NARIC.)

Nardy's report went on to say Atty. David was charged with preventing the people from looting the NARIC warehouse in San Miguel, while Don Luis was accused of befriending General Sato and of persuading the Japanese general to station a strong force of Japanese troops in San Miguel.

Nardy said he was given a pistol and he could have escaped easily as he was left alone in the camp a number of times, but he suspected this was a trap to test his loyalty.

Round about the third week, Nardy told Commander Gonzales he would like to go to Manila to let his family know he was alive. All the other officers in the camp objected. But not Gonzales. He got to like Nardy very much. But that week Gonzales fell seriously ill. In his crude bunk in a cave just before he died, Gonzales told his men it was his dying wish to allow Nardy to visit his family in Manila.

One September day, Nardy emerged from the hills, accompanied by a bodyguard. When they got to Baliuag, they met a squad of Japanese soldiers. His bodyguard fled in fright but Nardy just nonchalantly merged with the crowd and proceeded to Manila, alone. His first impulse was to see me to report what had happened.

At the NARIC office the next day, the Japanese supervisor in charge of provincial operations, Mr. Kabatake, was suspicious of Nardy and wanted to turn him over to the Kempetai for investigation. I objected. I told Kabatake I stood fully responsible for the conduct of my men and if they could not trust me in this case they can consider me resigned. They left Nardy alone.

I lost track of Nardy when I left the NARIC. When I saw him again, after the war, he joined me in the Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines Syndicate while continuing his law course. When he passed the bar, I did not hesitate to write a note to my friend, Don Alfonso Ponce Enrile, recommending Nardy for any job in the Ponce Enrile law offices.

Today, Nardy is head man of the firm and recognized as one of the country's top labor lawyers. It warms my heart to realize that a junior colleague at the NARIC had climbed the top rung of his profession the hard way.

AND NOW LET ME resume my account back to where I was doing a delicate tightrope act between the Japanese and the guerrillas.

On top of my troubles with the Japanese and the guerrillas, I was running into administrative difficulties with Filipino government officials, too. The head of the government-sponsored Rice Producers Association, the director of plant industry and the provincial governor of Pangasinan teamed up on one occasion to blame the NARIC — which meant me — for the worsening rice crisis.

The last straw was the confusion that followed in the wake of the inauguration of the so-called Japanese-sponsored "independent" Philippine Republic. Heretofore, the NARIC operated directly under the supervision of the Japanese military administration. There was little, if any, interference from the Philippine Executive Commission, then headed by my friend Chairman Jorge B. "George" Vargas. I never had any trouble reaching an understanding with George. He

was in fact helpful where his intercession was needed with the Japanese at higher levels.

But when the Republic was inaugurated on October 14, 1943, the confusion was worse confounded. The NARIC was placed offhand under the Food Administration Office, then headed by my friend, Jose "San" Sanvictores. San's first move was to work out a new set of rules and regulations. These rules had to be sanctioned by the Minister of Agriculture, Rafael Alunan. Between them, the rules took an overly long period of gestation and all this time the Japanese supervisor continued holding the reins — proof, indeed, that the so-called independence was a sham.

ONE DAY, Sanvictores informed me President Laurel was thinking of revamping the NARIC. He said a new agency was going to be created, to be named Bigasang Bayan or BIBA for short, primarily to give the people a fresh image since the NARIC appeared to be under fire.

I reminded San I had been trying to resign for more than a year but he said I should stick to the job until a final decision was made. I did not wait. That same afternoon, I drafted a letter for President Laurel in which I said in part:

> Mr. President, I have been manager of the NARIC since its creation six years ago. I dare say that in the past, it has rendered satisfactory, if not excellent, service to the people. I have dedicated these last years of my life to the end that I might be able to serve my country and people.
>
> But when I am made to understand that the management of the NARIC, and I in particular, have lost the confidence of my superiors and, more particularly of Your Excellency, then I have no alternative but to present my resignation.

But before I could send this letter through to the President, he called a mass meeting of leaders of the neighborhood associations in Manila and there and then announced that the NARIC was going to be abolished and replaced by a new agency.

And so, that ended my career with the NARIC. Looking back now, I should be thankful to President Laurel for finally enabling me to sever my connection with that moribund organization. As it was, my health was already in a precarious state. In the light of the increasing difficulties experienced by that rice agency as the Japanese military position in the Philippines worsened, I do not believe I could have withstood the ordeal had I stayed on.

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A TESTIMONIAL FOR PRESIDENT LAUREL

I was blissfully unaware that the Japanese wanted me executed.

TO THE VOLUMES that have been written about that great Batangueño, Dr. Jose P. Laurel, I am adding an account of my personal experience with him because I believe this story could help give additional insights into the character of the man.

As I have recounted earlier, it was getting more and more difficult towards the end of 1943 for the NARIC to carry out its mission of providing the people of Manila and environs with sufficient supply of rice. When I tried to clamp down on black marketeers, I drew the wrath not only of private traders in rice but, worse, a whole array of mayors, governors, and other government functionaries who had clandestine connections with the rice dealers. They had started a smear campaign against the NARIC and against me.

Among the major revamps announced by President Laurel when he assumed office after the proclamation of the Japanese-sponsored Republic was the abolition of the NARIC

and the transfer of its functions to the Bigasang Bayan (BIBA) under the food administrator. In an effort to smoothen the transition, the President summoned the heads of the neighborhood associations, some 4,000 of them, to a mass meeting at the quadrangle of the City Hall. There he announced that he had decided to abolish the NARIC because this organization had been infiltrated by what he called "bad apples" and he feared these "bad apples" might infect the rest of the organization.

Dr. Laurel did not specify who the rotten apples were, but since I was the manager of the organization and was therefore responsible for its operations, I felt alluded to.

On December 31, 1943, the last day of operation of the NARIC, I made a farewell speech before the personnel of the agency. I recounted how, up to the outbreak of the war, the NARIC was succeeding in stabilizing the price of rice and how we at the NARIC were so proud that the NARIC had been frequently cited as the model corporation among the government-run organizations.

I took occasion in that farewell speech to ask the forgiveness of any among the personnel on whom I might have committed any injustice as deep in my heart I had never carried any personal grudge against any of them. I also urged the lower-level employees who were staying with the agency to give of their best under the new dispensation as their work involved the all-important task of feeding the people. I saw a good number of my listeners in tears.

All this time, I suffered in anguish. I could not understand how Dr. Laurel could so humiliate me in his City Hall speech. For the impression among those who heard him and among those who had read the report on this speech in the local press was unmistakable: as headman of the NARIC, I

must have been referred to by Dr. Laurel as one of the rotten apples.

For nights I could not sleep. I felt that there was no legacy I could leave my children except my good name and now that name was being ruined. And since, deep in my heart, I knew I did not deserve this ignominy, I decided to seek some clarification from Dr. Laurel. Somehow, I had a feeling that he would do me justice once he knew the facts.

So I sought the advice of the Secretary to the President, Mr. Pedro Sabido, on how I could get through to the President. I told him my predicament and he understood. He kindly sent word to Dr. Laurel that I was in Malacañang and it would be a good thing if the President could spare a few minutes to see me. Whereupon, the President sent for me at once.

This was the morning of January 6, 1944. I took along with me my son, Felipe Buencamino III, for I wanted him to be a witness to this confrontation. I was certain I could redeem myself, at least in the eyes of my own son.

What transpired at this conference was graphically recounted by Philip in a memorandum he wrote immediately after we left Malacañang. I am reproducing Philip's version here in full because it had captured the many nuances of Dr. Laurel's remarks, especially those derogatory to the Japanese. I think his remarks revealed his courage at a very critical moment in our history.

I am inserting a few annotations at certain intervals of Philip's version to underscore certain points that might otherwise remain obscure. Also, I am taking the liberty of giving my own comments for what they may be worth. The insertions and my comments are italicized.

MEETING HELD AT MALACAÑANG PALACE AT THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

PRESENT: President Jose P. Laurel
Dr. V. Buencamino
Felipe Buencamino, III

TIME: 10:05 - 11:45 a.m. Jan. 6, 1944

"I've wanted to call you a long time ago," said the President to Dr. Buencamino while shaking hands with the doctor, "but the pressure of official duties and engagements have prevented me from doing so."

The President reclined on his swivel chair and he began to wipe his glasses as he spoke.

"Roxas and Aquino have asked me to see you," he stated, "but I thought it was no longer necessary for me to see you because I already made up my mind to dissolve the NARIC."

"I told Gen. Kuroda," he revealed, "that the NARIC would constitute a bad inheritance for my government. And I told him what I told in the City Hall about the anomalies in the NARIC and that (with emphasis) practically all the Japanese were crooks.

"Gen. Kuroda," recounted the President, "was astounded and he asked me if I could name the crooks and I said that I did not know because I had no facts. I only heard reports," said the President, pointing to his ears, "and I understand that the Japanese of the NARIC are now being investigated in Fort Santiago." The President looked at Dr. Buencamino as if waiting for an answer. But the doctor looked at the President straight to the eye, tightened his lips, remained silent, reserving his answer.

The President resumed cleaning his glasses, then explained: "In view of these facts, together with my previous decision, I therefore did not deem it necessary to call you anymore. My decision was already made. The Japanese were managing the NARIC and (he paused for a while) I did not want to be made to hesitate in my decision. I had to take drastic action to meet the situation."

The President surmised that Gen. Kuroda was probably taken aback by his rather frank outburst. He said: "Maybe I spoke too

strongly but I always try to speak frankly with them. Sabido advises me to speak more softly especially with the military, but that is not my nature. Anyway they give me due respect."

President Laurel continued: "Frankly, I am not interested in being President. I did not ask for this post. But I am here and I am going to do everything I can do while I am here."

He laid his glasses on the desk and with a low voice he said: "I am faced with many tremendous difficulties. This independence we have is an independence which is not independence. You have the Navy on one side, the Army on the other, the guerrillas, the Embassy and my own government. Five in all."

Dr. Buencamino smiled.

Continued the President: "I told Tojo that if I don't get any cooperation from either the Japanese or the Filipinos, there is no use my being here. It would be better for you to bring back the old military regime. But of course I do not want that as much as possible, because that would be a step backwards."

Then sitting erect and looking upward, the President said: "I am already 53 and I don't think I will live another 53 years. My life was already forfeited at Wack Wack. If another assassin wants to take my life, I am not afraid."

Reclining on his swivel chair, he resumed: "The other day, an admiral came here asking me for 60,000 hectares of land in Cotabato. I told him that I approve his request in principle because of the Mutual Alliance Pact. But I would like to see the papers so that I may give it additional study. But then the next day, the Army called me and asked why I authorized the Admiral's request. Apparently the 60,000 hectares were being utilized by Japanese development companies. And so when Murata paid me a courtesy call on New Year's Day, I brought this matter to his attention. I told him, 'why doesn't the Army and Navy get together and then come to me through you, so as not to put me in an embarrassing position.' But Murata got offended. Maybe he thought I was giving him a lecture and he left just like that," described the President with a cutting gesture of the hands. "I probably shouldn't have talked of official matters during a courtesy call. He was even dressed formally."

(The charges that Dr. Laurel was just a puppet of the Japanese are belied by his impudence when talking to the commander-in-chief of the Japanese forces and the Japanese ambassador.)

Dr. Buencamino was still silent. He simply looked at the President with a fixed gaze. He seemed to be looking through the President.

Continued the President: "Regarding this war, your opinion is as good as mine and mine is as good as yours. But the question which confronts us today is not whether America is coming back or whether we want her back but rather what should we do for ourselves. All these guerrillas are useless. What can they do to change the course of the war? None of us can do anything to change the course of this war. This isn't our fight. This is Japan's and America's. None of us know how long this war will last. So we must be prepared and determined to take care of ourselves.

(Note that Dr. Laurel advocated self-reliance a full 30 years before it became the article of faith that it is today.)

The doctor still remained quiet. His eyes were fixed intently on the President.

Reminisced Pres. Laurel: "I still recall those last Cabinet meetings at Marikina. We were there under the mango tree near the air-raid shelter. Don Manuel put up before the Cabinet the order he just received from Washington commanding him to go to Corregidor.

"In justice to him, I want to say that the President did not want to leave. But it was us — the Cabinet — including me that influenced him. I still remember his saying: "Laurel, write my letter and explain why I should not go. And I wrote that the people would not understand the President's act of leaving for Corregidor during a crucial period. It would be like running away, I wrote. The same things that are being said of him now.

"But finally, the decision was made and that he should go. Then he informed us that he should bring Valdes as Secretary of National Defense and at the same time a private doctor, and then he said that he would also take me along. I was ready to go. General MacArthur gave me a roll of good West point kahki. I went to Wang's and I ordered twelve uniforms. I still keep these. But I did not reveal anything to my wife. You see, she has a weak heart.

"Finally at the last minute, the President changed his mind and he said he would bring Jose Abad Santos instead. 'You Laurel,' he said, 'are influential with the Japanese. They have given you a doctorate. So, stay and help Jorge."

"And so I stayed," said President Laurel, "and we received the Japanese. I was Secretary of Justice then. I tell you it was hard in the beginning. Civilian Japanese would go into the courts and force decisions. They would slap people in the courts. So, I issued an order prohibiting civilian Japanese from entering the courtrooms without permission from the Commissioner of Justice. Because of this act, Kodama called me. I had to go to Fort Santiago — this is something which very few people know. They told me to withdraw my order. I explained that I was not anti-Japanese; that as a matter of fact, I am an Orientalist. I was almost expelled from the U.P., I explained, when as professor of the State University, I gave a very Orientalistic speech. It was only the intervention of Palma and Quezon that made the U.P. retain me. I told Kodama that with regards to Orientalism, I was not behind any Japanese. But when it comes to this order I issued, if they want to revoke it, let them tell the Commander-in-chief. And up to now that order stands."

(Another prophetic Laurel touch. Orientalism was his word for what ASEAN *is today.)*

"Regarding the NARIC dissolution, my decision was made beforehand. But let me assure you that I have no doubts about your efficiency, integrity and honesty. I realize the fights you have had and I know your past record and good service in the government and what I said in the City Hall has no reference whatsoever to you. As a matter of fact, I qualified my reference. I did not say all."

(My vindication, at last! At that instant, I looked intently at my son, hoping the good President's words registered well. This was the only thing, the most precious thing, I wanted Philip to convey to the coming generations of Buencaminos!)

Dr. Buencamino glanced at the clock at the corner of the room. It was 10:30, and for the first time, the doctor spoke:

"Mr. President, your decision has been made and you have expressed it publicly before 4,000 N.A. presidents. It has also been

given wide publicity. After what you have said and what has been written, may I now ask you in justice and fairness to me to write publicly what you have just stated about myself to correct whatever wrong impression may have been created by your speech. Please say so publicly or, if that is not possible, then in a personal letter, that you do not entertain any doubt about my efficiency and honesty, and integrity, as you have just told me now. Please state also that what you have publicly said against the NARIC does not refer to my humble self.

"I am requesting that you put down in writing what you have just told me in our conversation because my name is so linked with the NARIC that the surmise and implication, after your speech in the City Hall, is that I am referred to indirectly. And that is why I brought my son here, to be a witness to what you have to say as well as what I have to say. And that is also why I request a statement from you, because the only thing I can leave to my children is my good name. That is their only patrimony."

"Of course, of course, that will be done!" said the President.

"Now, Mr. President, please permit me to inform you of the rice situation. You have not heard or called me during all this crisis."

The President was listening intently. Dr. Buencamino had a very serious look on his face. Said the Doctor:

"Our people — even our leaders — are against controlled economy. And that is because, to begin with, they do not understand controlled economy. They do not realize its importance considering the present emergency situation.

"The first thought of our people, even our leaders, is how to evade it and how to take advantage of loopholes. The very representatives of the people — governors, mayors, assemblymen — interpreting the feelings of their constituents, ask for privileges, exceptions, passes. When refused (to make control effective) they are displeased. Now, all these, together with powerful forces, influential people, merchants, government institutions itself like the Bureaus and Rice Grower's Associations, have created a wave of strong opinion and hurled criticisms against the NARIC, and they are the only ones you have heard. On

top of it all, the Food Administrator sided with those forces . . . You have heard only their side. You have been carried away by them.

"However, all along both the Military Administration and the Department of Agriculture have been informed of an impending rice shortage way ahead of time, by myself.

"In May 1943, Colonel Uzaki, head of the Food Division, returned to Japan to negotiate with the Japanese Government for rice importation. A small quantity was imported but not sufficient to cover the shortage.

"On September 9, Secretary Alunan was officially advised by me that our rice supply was good only until October 30th. You were then Secretary of the Interior and Messrs. Alunan, Sanvictores, and I appraised you of the situation. We went to your office.

"The solution decided upon was to achieve the Cagayan Valley purchases, regardless of cost. It was decided to muster all transportation and to commandeer trucks, if necessary.

"The goal was 130,000 cavanes. This was attained. But this amount would be good only till November 30th. In other words, just one-month extension. By November 30th, there would be the early crop. Perhaps, the NARIC would be able to buy. But no! The NARIC could buy neither in November nor December and the NARIC, I submit, was not to blame for this. Let me tell you why.

"Normally, Mr. President, this country has a shortage. We have to import from Saigon and Burma almost every year to cover our deficit. Consequently, although I was only a manager in name and not in fact, I was worried and I took pains to forewarn the Military Administration and especially the Secretary of Agriculture. As I said, I wrote him memoranda and letters calling his attention to this impending rice shortage and all its attendant implications and disastrous consequences to our people. Alunan knows all of these."

"Ah, but Paeng does not like to work," interrupted the President.

"But it is not Alunan anymore in all this. It was Sanvictores with whom I was dealing most of the time," the Doctor pointed out.

"You see, Mr. President, when the NARIC was supposed to have been transferred to the Executive Commission, I began to take orders

from the Department of Agriculture. Because of this, I had forceful and strong differences of opinion with the Japanese, especially for the grant of independence. I stood up for our rights. I told them that I would take orders from the Commissioner of Agriculture and not from them. Apparently there was a misunderstanding about the transfer. Minister Alas had a conference with Colonel Utunomiya and then Minister Alunan told me to still recognize Colonel Uzaki as my chief.

"With this dual management, there was a lot of confusion and delay. The Military Administration fixed the price of palay at ₱5.00 October 4th and then Minister Sanvictores made an official statement that the Commission would pay a higher price. Naturally the planters did not sell to the NARIC. They hoarded their rice, waiting for a higher price. Then again, the very delayed announcement of the price at ₱8.00 on December 15th. The department delayed the announcement for more than a month. This delay hampered the NARIC's purchasing to a great extent, especially when you take into account the critical condition of the rice supply.

"Then we had to rush the organization of a fleet of trucks . . . 130 of them . . . to get the rice from the Valley. Here is where a lot of anomalies occurred. But I foresaw that, Mr. President. It is on record and Minister Paredes admits it, that I told them at the Department of Public Works that they should handle the transportation angle. I said, we are not engaged in this line. The NARIC is not a transportation company. It has no experience, no personnel, no organization for this kind of task. It is on record, Mr. President. You organize this and we will foot the bill, I said. Present also were Vice Minister Bayan and Director Aquino of the Bureau of Public Service. I told them that the organization of such a tremendous fleet of trucks — and I also wrote this to Minister Alunan — would give rise to numerous anomalies, to grafts. But the Public Works people after first accepting, refused in the last minute to undertake this job.

"So the NARIC had to do its best within the shortest possible time. We spent over half a million on trucks, fuel and spare parts. We had to hire hundreds of chauffeurs. We had to build bridges and

aerial cable bridges. The main thing was to get the rice in so as to maintain Manila's supply.

"To undertake this job, the Assistant Supervisor-de-Facto, Mr. Nakashima, went to the provinces personally. He was made the man in charge. But he had to return after a short while because his life was threatened. Two others took his place; Messrs. Uchiyama and Arizawa. And these two have not been able to handle the situation.

"Now, Mr. President, if you want to control all this black marketing in rice, the thing to do is not to go after the NARIC but the railroad. Clamp down on the railroad. Don't let them bring rice, except rice for the Government. The trouble is that the railroad is used by the profiteers to convey rice to be sold in the black market."

At this juncture, Dr. Buencamino's cigarette went off. The President kindly lighted it for him.

Dr. Buencamino continued:

"And the constabulary, Mr. President, What government agency is in charge of suppressing the black market? It is not the NARIC! The NARIC is not armed with police powers. This is the job of the Economic Police but all the blame is heaped on the NARIC.

"And Mr. President, I understand there have been criticisms against a large number of NARIC personnel. But sir, previously, we only owned four or five mills. Now we have 75. Previously we only stabilized prices, now we control the whole rice industry . . . yes, even distribution in Manila, Cebu, Iloilo and Bicol. NARIC is all over the Philippines. That's the reason for the increase in personnel. To man 75 mills and 250 warehouses, to purchase palay and distribute rice all over, together with training the necessary employees, requires a much larger number than before the war.

"Another thing I hear that has been said against the NARIC pertains to the distribution of *binlid* and *darak*," said Dr. Buencamino.

"Yes, yes," replied the President with a smile. "Yulo and Paredes brought samples of *darak* in the Cabinet meeting. But that was a very bad kind they showed."

"Here (handling samples) is what we distributed," Dr. Buencamino continued. "This is the story behind all that: We received

corn, *binlid* and some rice from the provinces. I announced this to Sanvictores two days ahead of time. Mark, Sir, two days. In the last minute, at 9 o'clock at night, he claims to have called Tanco ordering him to stop distribution of the *binlid* and Tanco claims to have relayed this to me. But for goodness sake, Tanco did not tell this to me.

But this is the point: nobody was forced to buy the *binlid*. We even said that if they didn't like it we would buy it back. Those really hungry could sieve it and eat what was edible. Anyway, only 117 sacks were returned from Intramuros, and the distributors wanted their *binlid* back the next day because they could sell it at a higher price in the black market, at least double the amount they paid for.

"But all this shows, Mr. President, an utter ignorance of the mechanics of distribution — distribution to a million and more men. Sanvictores can't be ordering something one minute and then cancelling it the next minute and then give a final order late at night when the office men are already resting in their houses. You've got to give the men time. You cannot rush orders for such a complicated work. The NARIC, Mr. President, cannot be run by remote control (banging the President's desk).

"I am not saying this for myself but for whoever is going to succeed me. The NARIC is equal if not bigger than a department even if the manager of the NARIC is not a Minister in rank. But if it is going to be as it is at present where the NARIC manager has to go to the Food Administrator and the Vice-Minister and the Minister and the Secretary to the President before seeing the President, and everything is already over and decided, pues, Mr. President, 'Acaba y vamonos!"

"Why," asked the President, "hasn't Sanvictores been to the NARIC?"

"Not since December 31. All the time we have been managed by remote control."

"I understand now. You see I don't know anything about the rice question."

"I am ready at any time to advise you, Mr. President, whether I am in or out of the government. I realize that you are probably

in a position where you are 'muy ocupado'."

"Thank you," said the President.

"And may I state, that I have instructed the men in the NARIC to cooperate wholeheartedly because if they do not do so, this country will be plunged into chaos."

"Thank you very much," said the President again.

"All I want, Mr. President, is to leave graciously, with honor, because a good name is the only patrimony that I can leave to my family and children."

"That will be done," assured the President. "If you want, you write the letter and I will sign it," he added.

"I want you to know," reiterated the President, "that I have never heard you alluded to in any of the accusations. In fact, this government reorganization is not yet settled, but I intend to give you a higher position."

"Thank you, Mr. President. If I can be of service, I will do it. But I am fagged out, worn out. I would be very happy if you would just state publicly that your speech in the City Hall had no reference to me."

"That will be done, I assure you."

The President accompanied Dr. Buencamino to the door. He extended his hands to father and son and then, in parting, he repeated: "Don't worry, I'll write that letter. And thank you for coming."

"Good'bye, Sir."

Then Dr. Buencamino went to Mr. Sabido's office, secretary to the President. "Thank you for advising him to call for me," said Dr. V. "I feel better now that I have spoken my mind."

"Vic," said Sec. Sabido, "I was just doing what I thought was right and just."

TRUE TO HIS WORD, Dr. Laurel on 26 January 1944 wrote me this letter:

Republic of the Philippines
Office of the President

Manila, January 28, 1944

My dear Mr. Buencamino:

I am sorry that due to the tremendous pressure of work, I have not been able to dictate this letter sooner as I promised. As I explicitly told you when you came, the dissolution of the NARIC was ordered as a matter of policy of my Administration. As a result of this dissolution, the immediate supervision and control had to be transferred to the Food Administrator. The fact that you were not reappointed was not due to anything against you. In fact, I had no information against your integrity or honesty as a public official. The fact also that the managership of the new corporation was not offered to you was due to the knowledge that you had wanted in the past to resign from the position.

With best wishes and regards, I am

Sincerely yours,

(Sgd.) JOSE P. LAUREL
President of the Republic of the Philippines

Mr. Victor Buencamino
26 Brixton Hills
Manila

I WAS GLAD PHILIP was able to do a detailed account of my meeting with President Laurel. Philip had a knack for good reporting and I thought his version caught the flavor and the essence of what actually transpired. I had copies made of Philip's memo and I distributed a few copies to

members of my family and a few close friends who, like me, might have been distressed by the "bad apples" story.

One such close friend was Mr. Arsenio Luz who was then serving as official spokesman for Malacañang. I handed him an extra copy for Secretary Sabido with the understanding that Sabido would, at the appropriate moment, show his copy to the President.

I found out later, to my dismay, that Mr. Sabido had kept his copy in his drawer and never found time to show it to Dr. Laurel.

In the meantime, one of the copies — which one I have never been able to verify — somehow fell into the hands of the Japanese ambassador, Mr. Murata, who understandably was disturbed when he read the passages about Dr. Laurel's berating the Japanese.

The Japanese ambassador took the matter up with Foreign Minister Claro M. Recto who, in turn, called the attention of President Laurel and reported that the story had displeased the Japanese ambassador.

One day, General Guillermo Francisco, then chief aide-de-camp of Pres. Laurel came to deliver to me a letter from Secretary Sabido. The General was stiff, almost unfriendly. He said Mr. Sabido wanted me to reply to the letter without delay.

Sabido's letter follows:

Republic of the Philippines
Office of the President

Manila, February 19, 1944

My dear Buencamino:

Yesterday afternoon, February 18th, Foreign Minister Recto turned over to His Excellency, the President, a copy of an alleged descriptive

transcript of a meeting held in his Office between you, your son, and His Excellency. The transcript was, according to Minister Recto, given to him by Ambassador Murata. A copy thereof is herewith enclosed.

His Excellency desires to be informed if you circulated this document or someone else has done it for you or with your knowledge and acquiescence, and in the affirmative, he would like to know what your purpose is in so doing. He is making this inquiry because a great portion of the statement attributed to him is false. On the other hand, nobody is authorized to quote the President of the Republic without his consent or knowledge; and, even if authorized, he should have been given opportunity to verify any statement attributed to him.

The President was also advised by one of his aides that your son who accompanied you at the time was armed with a revolver and was disarmed by the aide.

Very respectfully,

By direction of the President
(Sgd.) PEDRO SABIDO
Executive Secretary

Dr. Victor Buencamino
26 Brixton Hill
Manila
Encl.

I WAS COMPLETELY PERPLEXED. It was clear from Mr. Sabido's stern letter that something serious had developed. I was particularly puzzled by his claim that certain passages in the memorandum were "false." I could swear there was nothing false in it at all. And it was clear that the copy I had given Mr. Sabido through Mr. Luz never got to the President.

I tried to analyze the intent of Mr. Sabido's letter. I got it: the letter was designed to lay the basis for protecting President Laurel in case the Japanese made an issue of my story.

The afternoon of March 1, 1944, my good friend Civil Service Commissioner Jose Gil, delivered to me at my office on Felix Huertas street a draft of a proposed letter for my signature in reply to the Sabido note. I understood it was drafted jointly by Mr. Sabido and Mr. Gil who at that time was serving as one of the executive assistants in Malacañang.

Here is a copy of their draft:

Dear Secretary Sabido:

1. In answer to your letter of February 19, 1944, which I received only on February 25th, I am pleased to state the following:

2. The transcript of the conference between His Excellency, the President, and myself was written for purposes of record. Ever since I was called to the government service, it has been my practice to put on record what transpired at meetings and conferences, relative to my official work.

3. As the said transcript was not a stenographic record, it is possible that some omissions, unwittingly made, changed the meaning of the text. It is also possible that my son, who was present at the meeting and who reproduced from memory what transpired, may have received an impression different from what the President wanted to convey.

4. In showing that transcript to relatives and a few close friends, my sole intention has been to clear my name and honor. I have been approached by many persons with worried expression in the belief that I have been imprisoned in Fort Santiago "because I have stolen thousands of sacks of rice." Others have connected me with "anomalies in the NARIC" — an impression which has been generally and widely formed due to the implication of the President's speech at the City Hall and subsequently published in part in the "Vanguardia."

5. As a matter of fact, I handed on January 8th, two days

after the conference, a copy of the said transcript to Spokeman Arsenio Luz, who in turn asked me for another copy to give to you as Secretary to the President. This is the best evidence of my good faith and that I did not want to do anything underhanded. At this date, I now realize that I should have specifically asked Mr. Luz or yourself to show the transcript to the President.

6. The incident about my son who accompanied me being armed with a revolver should not be given any importance, as my son, who always goes with me, carries a licensed gun for our protection. As you will perhaps remember when we came to Malacañang that day it was for the purpose of seeing you, and not the President, who had not given us an appointment for that day. So when later on he summoned me to his presence, I considered it a rare good fortune.

7. I am sorry therefore if there had been any misinterpretation in this matter, and I hope that the explanation above will clarify matters to the satisfaction of His Excellency.

8. Please assure the President of my sincere cooperation and my readiness to answer any call of duty.

Very truly yours,

Hon. Pedro Sabido
Executive Secretary
Malacañang

I THOUGHT THE DRAFT was fairly well worded to suit their purpose, but I was not prepared to admit that Philip might have committed some inaccuracies in his version of the incident.

So I rehashed their draft and sent back my shortened version as follows:

1026 Felix Huertas
Manila, February 23, 1944

Dear Mr. Sabido:

1. I am pleased to accede to your request that I write this letter.

2. The transcript of the conference between His Excellency the President and myself was written for purposes of record. Ever since I was called to the Government service, it has been my practice to put on record what transpired at meetings and conferences relative to my official work.

3. The said transcript was not a stenographic record but to my mind it substantially records the conference between the President and myself. It was written immediately after the conference by my son who was present at the meeting.

4. In showing that transcript to relatives and a few close friends, my sole intention has been to clear my name and honor. I have been approached by many persons with worried expressions, in the belief that I have been imprisoned in Fort Santiago, "because I have stolen thousands of sacks of rice." Others have connected me with "anomalies in the NARIC — an impression which has been generally and widely formed due to the implications of the President's speech at the City Hall, and subsequently published in part in the "Vanguardia."

5. As a matter of fact, I handed on January 8, a copy of said transcript to Spokesman Arsenio Luz, who in turn asked me for another copy, to give to you as the Secretary to the President, the receipt of which you have acknowledged verbally.

Very truly yours,

(Sgd.) VICTOR BUENCAMINO

Hon. Pedro Sabido
Executive Secretary
Malacañang

ABOUT THIS TIME, the tide of the war was turning sharply against the Japanese and I did not hear anything further about the controversial memo. I was blissfully unaware that at one point, the Japanese military had proposed that I be executed!

This was what Mr. Sabido told me when I first met him after liberation. Considering that about this time the Japanese had been picking up scores of prominent Filipinos and executing them right and left, I must thank my lucky stars that my life had been spared.

Incidentally, my friend George Vargas just very recently made available to me a volume of the *Historical Bulletin* published by the Philippine Historical Association which contains a collection of documents on the Japanese occupation of the Philippines.

One such document was a memorandum submitted to President Laurel by Secretary Sabido, explaining certain facts relevant to Sabido's defense in a collaboration case against him in the People's Court.

Secretary Sabido confirmed in his memorandum that I furnished him a copy of Philip's memo "evidently for submission to the President before it was circularized." I am glad Mr. Sabido noted that point because it proved that I did not intend to embarrass President Laurel, which would have been the result if I had distributed the material behind his back and without his prior knowledge.

Mr. Sabido, however, overlooked in his memo the fact that he kept his copy in his desk drawer ostensibly to wait for an opportune moment and the case reached Dr. Laurel via Ambassador Murata before Sabido could show the President the copy I had furnished the Executive Secretary in advance.

"The Japanese were incensed," Mr. Sabido recounted in his memo. "It was suggested by the military police to President Laurel that the only adequate punishment for such an offense was the elimination of the author."

"Of course the President did not like at all the idea. The whole thing put the office of the President in a sort of commotion. I was the Executive Secretary and as I knew my part in it, I begged permission from President Laurel to intervene, which he granted."

There was a variation in detail on how my subsequent letter of explanation was finally written. In any case, Sabido wrote that when he handed my letter to Dr. Laurel, the latter commented: "I hope this will appease the Japanese." Sabido concluded his memo thus: "Apparently, the matter ended there."

BY OCTOBER OF the same year, General MacArthur's liberation forces had landed on Leyte. Just before the battle of Manila, certain members of the Laurel cabinet were taken by the Japanese to Tokyo and after the surrender of the Japanese, the group was repatriated home to face charges of collaboration. When I learned that the group was being detained at the Muntinglupa prisons I hurried there to visit my bosom friend, George Vargas.

When I got to Muntinglupa, the very first detainee I encountered at the corridor was President Laurel. He embraced me. He recalled the incident between us and said he hoped I would forgive him for any injustice he might have done to me.

I was near tears when I told him he owed me no apology.

Everytime I recall this experience of mine with President Laurel, the more my respect for him grew. I think he was a truly great man.

37

THE ROOF IS MY GRANDSTAND

We celebrated every American landing in the Pacific with a double dose of gin.

FOR THOSE of us who stuck it out in Manila during the last few months of Japanese occupation, life and living was a day-to-day gamble.

I knew of friends who left their homes in the morning in search of food or just to fight boredom and never returned. There was a time when the desperate Japanese regarded every loose Filipino male a mortal enemy — and rightly so. Many such unlucky ones were shot on sight.

A number of prominent Filipinos suspected of listening to Voice of America broadcasts were herded and executed en masse. Protests by "Republic" officials went unheeded, and when the going got really rough, these officials themselves were herded up to Baguio and eventually flown to Tokyo.

For those who managed to get out of the way of the Japanese *Kempetai,* the main problem was food. Practically, all available modes of transport — trains, trucks, cars,

motorcycles, bicycles, *calesas,* even push carts — were commandeered on sight by the Japanese troops, so there was no way of transporting foodstuffs to Manila from the provinces even if there were suppliers who might have had the courage to risk life and limb travelling on the roads.

Mostly because of scarcity and also because the Japanese had dumped their war notes with reckless abandon, the price of food items, if there were any at all, rose astronomically by the hour.

SEPTEMBER 21, 1944. That was a red letter day. I had gone on a routine visit to my office at Felix Huertas that morning when some 80 warplanes swooped down from all directions. At first, I thought they were Japanese planes out on maneuvers because there had been no air raid warning. But I could hear the volleys of anti-aircraft guns and I saw shellbursts in the sky billowing like balloons. Unconcerned, I rode back home in my *carromata.* But by the time I got back home, another batch of warplanes zoomed in. There were explosions from the direction of Manila Bay. Some planes dived towards Camp Murphy, spewing what I thought were blank machine-gun fire.

After the second raid, I was still unconcerned, and so was my brother-in-law, Gabriel La O, who kept practising his golf swing in front of his yard nearby. Me, I decided to take a brief nap at about 11 a.m. But I was abruptly awakened by a third raid that morning. A machine-gun bullet pierced the roof of my father-in-law's room and landed on floor near his bed. We saw shrapnel splinters scattered around the concrete tennis court. Only then did I realize that the raids were for real and that the Japanese had been

caught so flat-footed they did not even have time to sound the alarm.

Philip and Vic reported after a curiosity trip downtown that a number of ships were burning in the bay; that the Japanese were frantically scampering about, obviously very confused; that there were a number of civilian casualties, mostly from shrapnel and falling anti-aircraft fragments.

We were all ecstatic. This was the first evidence of the presence of MacArthur's forces in the Manila area in almost three years. It was the beginning of the end of a long, long wait.

I was amused at the Japanese version of the raids. Major Hasegawa, who spoke passable English said Japanese fighters purposely remained grounded so they would not be exposed to their own anti-aircraft fire.

Hasegawa came with word we had dreaded: that the bombed-out Japanese units at the Port Area had decided to move to Brixton Hill.

"So sorry, but you have to vacate in 24 hours," he said.

In the afternoon, another Japanese officer came to follow up their take-over of the house. He admitted that two of his companions were killed during the raid on their quarters at the Port Area. And he said the Japanese planes did not challenge the American raiders because the Japanese command wanted to save their planes for an invasion of the United States next year.

His story was not funny to us. The next day we had to evacuate to a small rented chalet on V. Mapa Street. But we were not too downhearted, for every day MacArthur's

planes came raiding. We had a feeling we'd get our home back before long.

The next four days, you could have set your clock by the air raid warning. About 8:40 every morning, the American planes roared in, raked targets with bombs and machine-gun fire and flew away unmolested by Japanese fighters.

I would climb up the roof of our evacuation house to have a grandstand view of the attacks. Sometimes planes glided just above our heads, the pilots waving merrily at us. Little did I realize that many folks literally lost their heads watching raids from positions exposed to flying shrapnels.

SURE ENOUGH WE had a close brush with death one day. For more than a month, the raids had been going on almost daily. Nothing much had happened to us and round about this time we had gotten used to not hiding in the air raid shelters anymore.

The early morning of Saturday, December 16th, I was shaving when there was a sudden raid. I had barely finished shaving the right side of my face when I heard the bombing and machine-gunning so close I decided to run down to the shelter for cover.

That morning, I noted in my diary:

Bullets or shrapnel pierced our roof. Entered just opposite daughter Neneng's chair in the dining room. Vic and I were seated at the table. Neneng, Dolly and the maid Emilia bringing in breakfast. A sudden noise, splashing and scattered timber splinter. Emilia crying.

Wounded slightly: Emilia, Neneng, Vic. Emilia: half a dozen superficial wounds of varying length from one to two inches on left

forearm, outer side and on right leg. Neneng: small splintered wound on right eyelid and a larger one on right forearm. Vic: a burnt scar the size of a 20-cent piece. Emilia cried. Neneng thought she was blind and Vic limped, thinking he was severely wounded. Dolly, who herself had an eighth-of-an-inch scratch near her left ear, dressed them all . . .

Debris: the roof was pierced by two circular openings the size of 50-centavo pieces. One and one-half meter by 10-inch wide of the ceiling fell and numerous splintered wood all over the table, dining room and sala.

The bullet went through the floor.

Unexploded cannon bullet 3 meters back of the garage. It was 2 3/4 inch diameter and 12 inches long. I don't know whether it's still live. If it isn't, I want to keep it as souvenir . . . The Japanese told a neighbor that the raiders hit an ammunition dump near by and the explosion sent the bullets flying. Thus we are in the dangerous path of raiders en route to hit targets in San Juan, Quezon City, Wack Wack, Neilson, McKinley and Nichols.

After this incident, I gave up my grandstand perch on the rooftop and we all preferred to just enjoy the sound effects of the raids from the safety of the shelter.

I HEARD ONE DAY that Japanese investigators were looking for me. I surmised that I was wanted for any or all of these three reasons: (1) my son Philip's memorandum on my interview with President Laurel (see Chapter 36) must have antagonized the Japanese; (2) they wanted to follow up my complaints, when I was still in the NARIC, against certain Japanese administrators whom I had charged with irregularities; and (3) the Japanese were looking for the bolts of the wheels of my old Buick which I had hidden at my Felix Huertas warehouse by covering the car with hay straw (*guinicang*) used to feed the animals at the clinic.

When I learned that I was wanted, I made plans for a fast getaway. I learned that the Japanese usually picked people up at night so for nights on end I slept in the cellar of my neighbor, Mr. Pyer, a Swiss former treasurer of the Philippine Manufacturing Co. I was fond of my neighbor mostly because he had contacts with the underground and it was through him that I got my first copies of *Life* magazine that had been smuggled in by the guerrillas. Mr. Pyer, moreover, had very resourcefully stored away several demijohns of genuine gin in his basement, and he had ingenously made 10 carbuoys of *cabuyao,* a citrus concentrate very much like *calamansi.* He and I spent many glorious evening hours plotting the allied landings on the map while we imbibed glasses after glasses of our version of old-fashioned Tom Collins. Everytime the Americans made a new landing, we celebrated by doubling our dose of gin.

ONE DAY I HAD a real scare. A couple of Japanese marines showed up apparently foraging for food. They riveted their eager eyes on a couple of white leghorns in our backporch. We had tended these layers with loving care because they gave us an average of one egg each every day and we were rationing these eggs in rotation to the female members of our starving family.

So I was poised to persuade these two Japanese marines to spare these leghorns. When my defense reached a point of near-violence, my poor wife fainted with a thud on the floor in the adjoining room. This made my son Philip roaring mad. He told the Japanese that if his mother should die, they were not leaving the house alive. I rushed for a doctor around the corner and, fortunately, Lolita was revived after

an injection, and meanwhile the Japanese marines forgot all about the leghorns and fled on all fours to the delight of my veteran son Philip.

THE LANDING OF the liberation forces on Leyte in October, followed by another landing on Mindoro a month later, plus the intensified air raids on Japanese installations in the Manila area threw the Japanese into near panic in Manila. This made life for us civilians that much more perilous.

We noted sudden changes in the personnel occuying our commandeered houses. Everytime one batch left, they encouraged their houseboys and friends to loot the house. It got so bad there was absolute mob rule towards the end of the year. Vacated houses were wiped clean of furniture and belongings. Even door knobs and fixtures were ripped off. In a couple of instances, I tried to save the homes of neighbors who had evacuated to the provinces, but in both instances I nearly lost my life either to angry Japanese soldiers or to the looters.

And meanwhile, the food situation was worsening each day. Our stock of canned goods which we had been nursing along since the CEA days of 1941 was almost gone. We started exchanging our belongings for food. First, the curtains went. Then some of our own clothes. Lolita and the daughters wept everytime I had to lug some of our clothes out to exchange for food.

Then a stroke of good fortune hit us. The Japanese units stationed in our area had been directed to either join their other units in the southern part of the city for a last

stand or retreat to the hills in Montalban. One by one, the Japanese vacated our houses with but minor incidents. We were luckier than folks south of the Pasig where many families were massacred by the Japanese during their futile final stand.

The night of February 3rd, 1945, we got a call from our maid at Felix Huertas. The Americans had come. In fact, a number of them had entered the office to rest after a long drive through Central Luzon.

Thus ended for us the nightmare of the Japanese occupation.

38

MY PUPPY MANA HAS A PREMONITION

We had a great big feast on a loaf of good old American bread.

I WAS AWAKENED around 11:00 o'clock the night of 3 February 1945 by a prolonged wailing of our pet puppy whom we called Mana. It was an earie kind of a dog's cry, prolonged and high pitched. Mana never cried like that before. I remembered superstitious old folks saying such wailing cries presaged a tragedy.

The times being what they were, I suspected Mana might be scenting some prowlers. So I told Philip to run down the yard to check. Vic went down with him, holding a flashlight. They saw nothing.

But Mana kept on wailing. So I slid into my boots, grabbed my pistol and searched the fence area where Mana was facing. No; not a soul in sight.

As I returned to my room, I heard the report of heavy artillery fire, followed by deafening explosions. I peeked out the window and saw glares in the skies over old Manila. Fires had broken out in at least three areas.

Earlier that evening, our maid at Felix Huertas had called up Philip to report that the Americans, at long last, had arrived. "They are here in the office right now!" the girl shouted.

In an instant, the whole neighborhood was jumping with joy. I called my neighbor Pyer. "Come over," he hollered. "Let's celebrate twice over — it's my birthday, too!"

The few past months, Pyer and I had secret toasts together everytime the Americans made a successful landing in their comeback trail across the Pacific. But tonight, of all nights, we could not drink. We could not eat. We were too excited. MacArthur, the son-of-a-gun, had really returned!

The following day, Philip came home with the first versions of the American entry into Sto. Tomas. He said the commander of his underground unit, Captain Colayco, rode in an assault jeep that piloted the first tanks to storm into the concentration camp, was wounded 13 times and was in serious condition at the emergency hospital manned by American medics inside Santo Tomas. We learned later that he died in a few days.

Philip reported that when the Japanese sentries at the main gate were overwhelmed, their contingent inside the camp retreated to one of the buildings, keeping some 200 American internees hostage. But after a while, the Japanese stragglers, about 37 of them, meekly surrendered.

Philip said he was introduced to General Chase, commander of the Sixth Army, who at once appointed him lieutenant in charge of screening and evaluating guerrilla reports.

He said among the first internees he met were his colleagues at the *Bulletin*, News Editor Ford Wilkins and Women's Editor Bessie Hackett.

IT TOOK SEVERAL days before we saw our first Americans in our neighborhood. I had stayed well within our backyard: Philip had warned us not to risk going to town yet because Japanese snipers were still everywhere; land mines had been planted by the retreating Japanese, and shrapnel was raining in many places as the Americans and the Japanese traded artillery fire.

The Japanese also cut off the utilities as they withdrew from our sector. We had neither light nor water. We dared not go to market — I doubted if the market could keep open, anyway. It was an ordeal gathering scraps that went for firewood. We had run out of fresh food when the refrigerator went out. Poor Lolita was on the verge of a nervous breakdown.

You can imagine what a relief it was when a detachment of American troops finally hit the Sta. Mesa area, accompanied by about 10 Filipino guerrillas. They came just as I was returning home from the river side where my neighbor's houseboy and I had chased alone a lone Japanese straggler. He escaped by swimming across the river back of V. Mapa street, holding us back with shots from what I estimated was a .45 automatic (against my puny .38).

Excitedly, I pointed to the Americans the direction of the straggler's flight, but to my disappointment they did not give my volunteered intelligence information any importance.

"We're looking for hundreds of Japs," Lieut. Glen S. Sallie, head of the unit, told me. "One Jap isn't worth chasing."

Before the day was over, another squad, led by Lieut. Bruce Davies, joined the Sallie group and they all decided to bivouac in the basketball court in front of our yard, under the shadows of a cereza tree. We gave them mats and mattresses. We told them we were sorry we had no hot chow we could offer them and Bruce laughed out loud, saying of course they did not expect us to have any foodstuffs left; in fact, they expected to meet starving civilians — which we were.

That afternoon, the officers offered us some of their K-rations and a whole loaf of good old American bread. American bread, after more than three years of famine! What a feast we had!

The following morning, I played guide to the troopers. I sketched for them the locations of the more important landmarks: the course of the San Juan river, the railroad bridge, the Taiwan docks, the radio station, the San Juan *Deposito,* Camp Murphy and Wack Wack which had been occupied by the Japanese.

After a thorough reconnaissance of his sector, Sallie reported that the Japanese had gone.

The next couple of months, we thrived on canned goods distributed by the Philippine Civil Affairs Unit (PICAU).

BY 11 FEBRUARY 1945, Philip told us it was safe to visit Sto. Tomas. My neighbor Pyer, ever resourceful, had his old De Sotto restored into running condition and we breezed

into town in it — Pyer, Philip and I, with two GI's assigned by newly-promoted Captain Sallie to escort us.

It was a grand reunion at Sto. Tomas. It took some doing just shaking hands and embracing as the internees were all emaciated, but I soon recognized of my very close friends among them: Dave Boguslav of the *Manila Times*; Ned and Ted Hall of the telephone company, Jim Rockwell of Meralco and many others.

There were oldtimers there, too, who had returned with the MacArthur forces: Pete Grimm, Courtney Whitney, Doc Smith, Sam Wilson and Chick Parsons who was now commander in the U.S. Navy. They were all working with the PICAU. Pete Grimm, now a colonel, was in charge of the Sto. Tomas camp.

It turned out that by this time these bigwigs were studying how they could organize a rice distribution system for the civilian population. When Colonel Whitney saw me, he told Grimm: "Ol! Doc Buencamino here, he is just the man we are looking for!"

I was forwith introduced to Capt. Mike Kestler who was in charge of the Civil Affairs Section of the Sixth Army's Administrative and Supply Office. The line of command was soon defined: the functions of the old NARIC was to be performed by a unit under Capt. Joe Richards and the Rice Procurement Office (RPO) was to be headed by Lieut. Arnold Gluck.

At our first conference, the American officers were quite businesslike. They wanted to know if I had any operations plan (I had), and what pay I would consider.

"I am offering my services as a dollar-a-year man for the duration of the emergency," I told Capt. Kestler. "Let

us not talk about pay. If you think I can be useful, I am ready to serve until a regular distribution service is organized and functioning. Then I'll step out as soon as you can find someone ready to take my place."

"You are appointed," Kestler said. "Let's organize the office at once."

We spent the rest of the hour discussing rice prices, weight, consumption, milling and distribution. I told them to give me a week to organize a crew.

Word spread fast. In a couple of days some 50 colleagues from the old NARIC appeared at my office at my old Felix Huertas hospital, ready to work. That afternoon, a number of rice producers came with offers to sell whatever they had salvaged from the fighting.

Within the week, we had a semblance of a NARIC organization all lined up, ready to start buying and selling. After two weeks at it, Lieut. Gluck handed me a check for ₱145.29. He said it was my pay. I said I was working for a dollar a year, but he said it was the biggest item within his authority to pay for civilian assistance and I must accept the check because he would be in trouble otherwise as they are under strict orders to pay for every civilian service rendered.

BEFORE I COULD ascertain whether my pay in effect rated me as a mess sergeant, I received word from Captain Richards that things were developing so fast that the RPO would soon be transferred from the Sixth Army to the USAFFE, with the further aim of transferring the office to the Commonwealth government as soon as it is organized.

I reassessed the situation and decided that anything I did at this point was in the nature of a temporary volunteer service pending the formal reorganization of the NARIC under the Commonwealth government. I heard in the meantime that it was the policy of the returning government to purge all those who had served under the Japanese regime, regardless of whether they had to serve under duress.

So when President Osmeña marched into Malacañang in triumph on 27 February 1945, I told Captain Richards it was best that I refrained from further working with his unit. He understood.

I heard that Governor Juan O. Chioco of Nueva Ecija had been commissioned to start reorganizing the NARIC. Manager Gregorio Anonas of the National Development Co. contacted me one afternoon to find out if I was interested in returning to the NARIC and I told him if the government invited me to serve, I shall assist in getting the rice agency reorganized and then return to private business. I made it clear I would not seek the job.

Round about this time, the collaboration issue was at white heat and although I had been cleared by the CIC, I thought it prudent to remain just a private citizen.

IN THE MEANTIME, the battle for Manila's southern sector was raging and my attention was devoted to assisting homeless friends who survived the massacre. Among them was my friend, Dr. Antonio G. Sison, head of the Philippine General Hospital where some of the bitterest room-to-room fighting took place. He was grateful for the little food and clothing I was able to collect for him and his family. They all had nothing but the rags on their backs.

Other refugees whom we helped were the families of my old friend, Dr. Antonio Vasquez and the Jesus Bayots.

We were equally pleased when Mrs. Virginia Romulo appeared at the house one day the first week of March. With her was her brother, Pelagio (who later became ambassador), and her two sons.

Sought by the Japanese through most of the occupation, Virginia and her family hid with the guerrillas in the mountains of Laguna. Part of the disguise was for Pelagio to pose as her husband.

When MacArthur learned from the guerrillas that Virginia was safe in the hills, he arranged for a rescue with a Piper Cub. The guerrillas made a little clearing in the mountains for the Piper to land and the Romulos were ferried to Grace Park. From there they went directly to our house.

They were not allowed to take their belongings along in the light plane so we had to provide them with everything: clothes, towels, soap, toothbrushes — everything.

The rescue of Virginia was particularly gratifying to Lolita. They had been pals all their lives.

Virginia was happy to learn that I had saved her matrimonial bed. When General Romulo fled with MacArthur, he asked me to salvage whatever I could from his Malate home. I was able to hide his bed in a Paco warehouse where I found it intact after the fighting.

BUT WHATEVER JOYS we felt for once more seeing so many long lost friends, these joys were drowned in the sorrows we felt as we heard that friend after friend had perished in the massacre in Manila's south side. When the

carnage was over, the papers reported that Manila's civilian population had suffered perhaps the worst slaughter and brutality in any city in World War II.

I got to thinking: this is what is so tragic about wars. Human beings become beasts. How many fine people had to sacrifice their lives, all because the leaders of nations could not settle their differences with reason across a conference table?

Everytime I recall the great Manila tragedy of February, 1945, I am haunted by the wailing cry of my pet dog Mana. Sometimes you can't help being a bit superstitious.

39

TWO SETS A DAY KEEP THE GERONTOLOGIST AWAY

And how the Far East Olympiad bowed out of existence.

MY BOSOM FRIEND, Jorge B. "George" Vargas and I have many things in common. He has just observed his 86th birthday while I will be well past 88 by the time this book comes out. We still both play at least two sets of tennis every afternoon, weather permitting, at the Philippine Columbian and we have both devoted a fair portion of our lifetime to the promotion of sports in the Philippines.

But our similarity, sportswise, ends there. For George was a true giant in Philippine sportsdom while I had been, at best, just one of his subalterns.

For example, George headed the Philippine Amateur Athletic Federation right from its founding under a legislative charter in 1925 while I had served as vice president and charter director. George, in fact, is to date, the only Filipino ever to be elected to the International Olympic Committee. He deserved it, too.

It was mostly through George Vargas' personal effort that the Rizal Memorial Stadium complex was built in the early 30s in time for the holding of the 10th Far Eastern Championship Games. It is not generally known that the charity sweepstakes races were originally conceived to raise funds for the construction of the Rizal Memorial Stadium. At the behest of President Quezon, some proceeds from the sweepstakes races were later also allocated for the support of the Quezon Institute.

In a way, our sweepstakes races were copied from the famous Irish Sweepstakes. George and his crowd at the Columbian had heard of the Irish version but no one really know how the thing was done in Ireland.

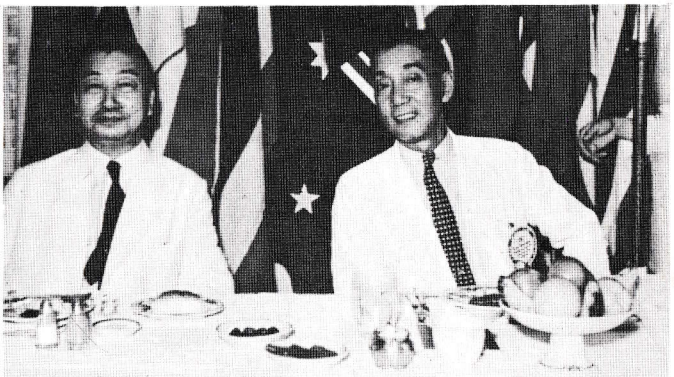
I recall that it was my erstwhile fellow student at Boone's, Marcos Roces, who volunteered to write the Irish Sweeps people for information and we were so pleased when we received all the information we needed from Dublin.

I was in from the start as head of the technical group that passed upon the qualifications of the horses entered in the races. Only one race was held every year. A Sweeps race was truly a big event then and the attention of the whole nation was focused on it. As a friend of mine has aptly commented: "Sweepstakes races then were not quite as vulgarized as now."

WELL, ANYWAY, thanks to the sweepstakes, George was able to raise some ₱3 million to finish the Rizal Memorial Stadium complex in time for the 10th Far Eastern Championships in May, 1934. I was named head of the operating committee, which meant I was to attend to all arrangements

The first Directors of the National Rice and Corn Corporation were picked by President Quezon for their high reputation and prestige. This picture, taken after the Board's organization meeting in 1936, shows (from left) Member Dr. Nicanor V. Jacinto, Member Doña Narcisa B. de Leon, Vice President and General Manager Dr. Victor Buencamino, President Vicente Singson Encarnacion, Secretary-Treasurer Arsenio Paez, Director Manuel Roxas (then Secretary of Finance who became the first president of the independent Republic 10 years later), and Member Cornelio Balmaceda, then Director of Commerce. Not in photo is Director Maximinio Noel.

I was elected president of the Rotary Club of Manila in 1938, the third Filipino to head this international organization in 20 years. Rotary is one battleground where equality has been totally won. Chinese Minister Lingoh Wang was our speaker in this luncheon program.

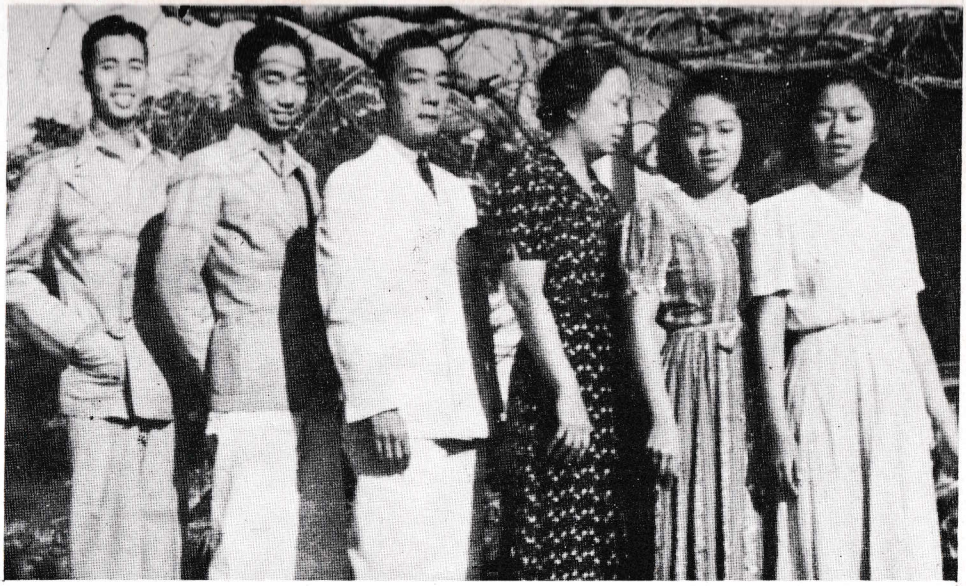


Rotary Program – November 17, 1938
Chinese Minister Lingoh Wang — V. Buencamino, Rotary President

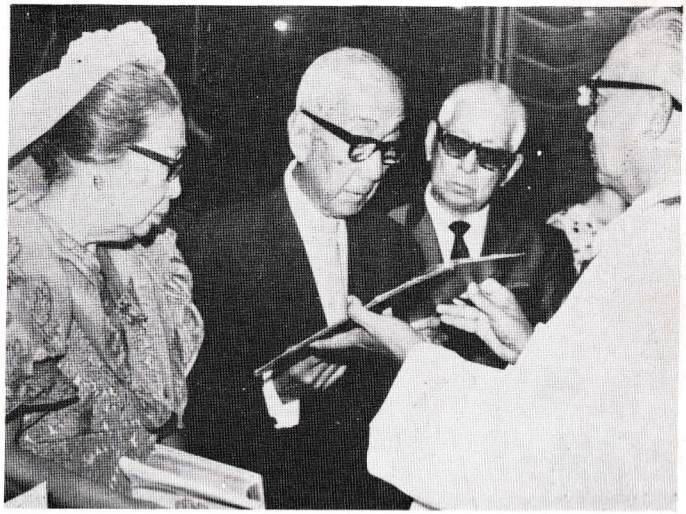
Nini and Philip pose for a formal wedding picture in front of President Quezon's portait after the reception.

Philip and Nini Quezon were married at the University of Sto. Tomas chapel on 23 February 1947. Doña Aurora and I were sponsors.

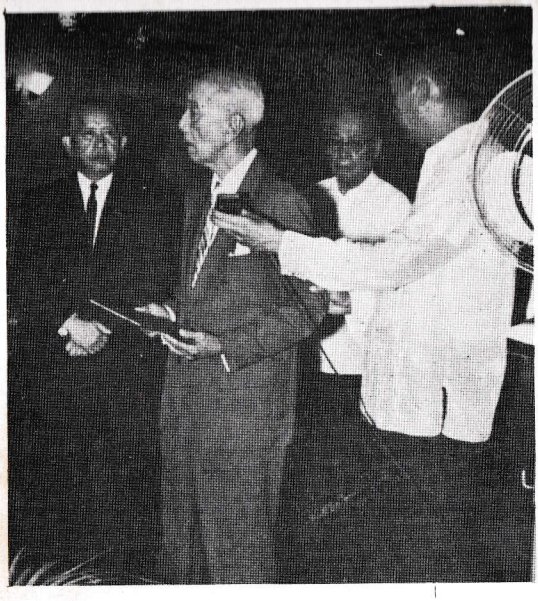
Nini and Philip pose for a formal wedding picture in front of President Quezon's portait after the reception.



This family photograph was taken in Baguio sometime in 1935. From left, Philip, Victor, Jr., my wife Lolita and I, Dolly and Neneng. Lolita carried the entire burden of rearing the children and running the household, enabling me to devote my full attention to my profession and business responsibilities.



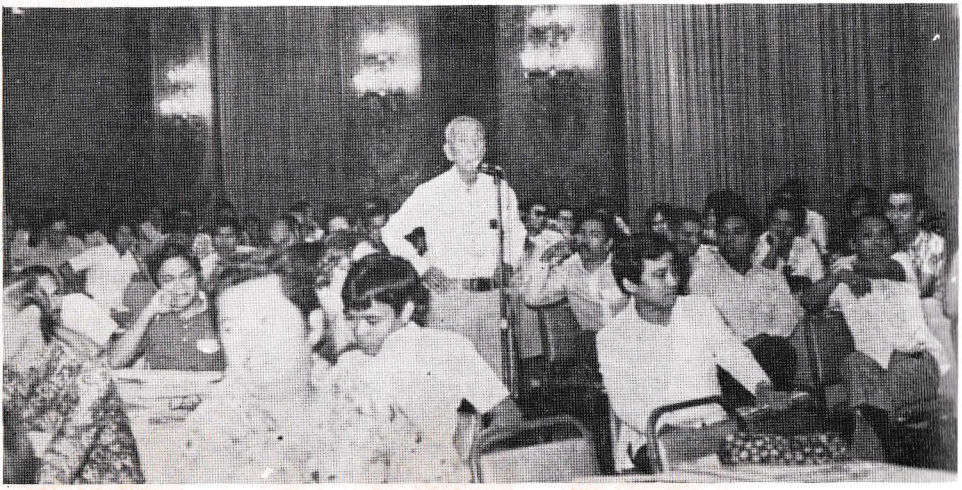
We repeated our marriage vows on our 50th wedding anniversary in 1969. My children were pleased to see me conform to the Catholic rites. Mass was said by Father Pacifico Ortiz who was President Quezon's spiritual counselor during the war years.



UP President Carlos P. Romulo had just handed me a plaque bearing my appointment as professor emeritus of the UP College of Veterinary Medicine in 1965 and I am making my acceptance remarks.

I have been so busy admiring beauty I haven't had time to grow old. Here I am admiring "Miss Luzon" Cynthia Ballesteros during a Rotary Club social at the Polo Club in 1974.

I have maintained a lifetime interest in veterinary medicine. I am seen here participating in a forum on foot-and-mouth disease during the 1975 national conventions of the Philippine Veterinary Medical Association.



except the games proper which was the job of Dr. Regino Ylanan. I also served on the contest and program committees.

In addition, I was a delegate, along with Speaker Antonio de las Alas and Dr. Antonio Sison, to the Far East Athletic Association Congress, the working body that prepared for the next Games and made changes in the rules and constitution of the Association.

The battles that developed in the Congress made the 10th Games truly historic. For it was at this meeting that the Far East Athletic Association was abolished. In fact, as it turned out, the 1934 Games in Manila were to become the last prewar Far Eastern meet.

At the tense opening meeting of the Congress held at the social hall of the Philippine Columbian Association on Taft avenue on May 19, 1935, the Japanese delegation proposed an amendment to Art. III of the constitution so that the Congress may admit new member countries to the Association by two-thirds vote instead of the prevailing unanimous rule.

Japan was anxious to enter the membership of Manchukuo, a new state carved by the Japanese out of the old Chinese territory of Manchuria. China was certain to veto such an application from Manchukuo, whereas this application had excellent chances of getting approved by two-thirds vote. It was the first and last political battle to rock the Far Eastern Championships since the Association was organized in Manila in 1913.

As chairman of the Congress, George named an ad hoc committee headed by Speaker Antonio de las Alas, with a representative each from Japan and China, to try and

settle the dispute. I recall that I took the group to my house for lunch, hoping that they could meet more cordially and reach an agreement in the quietude and privacy of Brixton Hill.

But it was no go. One of the Japanese in the group whispered to me that if they failed to get Manchukuo into the FEAA in this Congress, the Japanese delegation would suffer such disgrace back home that they might even go to the extreme of committing *hara kiri.*

Then Speaker Alas thought of a bright idea. To satisfy the Chinese, the unanimity rule was going to remain intact. But to satisfy the Japanese, any host country in future meets would be authorized to invite athletes from any country in the Far East to participate although said country was not a full member of the Association.

For the Japanese, this was good enough. At least the door had not been completely shut on Manchukuo. But the Chinese were adamant. Sensing that they would be outvoted on the Alas formula, the Chinese walked out of the session hall before a vote could be taken. George called another meeting for the following Monday, but again the Chinese delegation preferred not to show up. Whereupon, the Japanese and Philippine delegations voted to consider the Far Eastern Athletic Association dissolved and, in its place, a new body was created named the Amateur Athletic Association of the Orient (AAAO).

It was our feeling among the Philippine delegates that the Chinese missed the boat when they steadfastly refused to attend the final session of the Congress. For if they had voted in favor of the Alas compromise plan, they could have had effectively blocked the participation of Man-

chukuo in the next games since the unanimity rule would still have prevailed and as the next host, it would have been up to the Chinese not to invite Manchukuo in 1938.

I rather suspected that the Chinese at that moment were being unduly sensitive. They had done quite badly in the Games, having won only the football championship. The Japanese and the Filipinos had dominated all the other events. I could only surmise that the Chinese might have thought that the Philippine delegation was inclined to side with the Japanese — which just was not so — for the added reason that round about this time Japan already was a dominant military power in this part of the world and it was in the self-interest of the Philippines to cultivate Japan's goodwill.

As far as I can recall, the only instruction to the Philippine delegation was not to get involved and to be absolutely neutral in the Sino-Japanese quarrel. That the FEAA went to pieces at that Congress was, to my mind, more a result of an unfortunate misreading by the Chinese of the Philippine position than anything else.

Thus did the Far Eastern Athletic Association bow out of history after 21 years of harmonious relationships. It marked the end, too, of prewar Far East meets because in 1938, with China originally scheduled to play host, Japan's design for more conquests on the mainland was already manifest. It was Manila's turn again to host the Oriental Olympiad in 1942. Instead, the Japanese came over with bombs.

GEORGE STAYED ON as head of the PAAF up to 1953, when Tony de las Alas succeeded him. It was under Alas

that the PAAF hosted the Second Asian Games in 1954, this time with four countries participating. I was still director of the PAAF and Alas drafted me to head the committee that looked after the accommodations and feeding of the visiting athletes who were billeted at the University of the Philippine campus in Diliman. It was quite a trick feeding athletes of various religions and customs. The Muslims did not eat pork. The Pakistanis wanted their dishes real hot. The Japanese wanted their raw fish prepared as only Japanese cooks knew how to prepare them.

But withal, we managed to prevent famine in Diliman and I have plaques of commendation to show for what was described as my efficient and exemplary leadership in playing maitre d' hote for 1,000 or so athletes from all of Asia, as far east as Japan and all the way west to Israel.

I was favored in doing this job by the observation I made at the Helsinki Olympics in 1952. I was sent there by the PAAF precisely to study how to billet and feed hordes of athletes.

GEORGE AND I for all practical purposes retired from involvement in the PAAF after the Asian Games, but, as I have said, we never gave up tennis. We often play triple tennis, that is, there are three players on each side. We think Columbian is the only place in the world where triple tennis is played. Our group of fast aging folks contrived this system because with three players on each side, one did not have to chase the ball — someone was bound to be around to retrieve the ball wherever it landed on the court.

George and I are living proofs that two sets of tennis a day keep the doctor away. In our group of some 10 super-veteran regulars at Columbian, four are past 80 and the rest all past retirement age.

I have tried many sports: handball, baseball, football, swimming, polo — but I like tennis best, mostly because in my heyday, I was not the worst at it.

I first learned to play tennis in Berkeley, and when I returned in 1908, I was among the very first Filipinos to take up the game. No wonder my partner, Francisco Javier, and I reached the finals of what was then regarded as the national doubles championship in 1914. Everytime I remind my cronies at the Columbian that I was once nationally ranked, they always ask me how many — or better yet, how few — contestants were entered in that tournament.

Pretty soon, the local social and sports clubs picked up tennis in a big way. I still have a clipping of an account of how in April of 1922. Dr. Antonio Sison and I fought it out in the finals of the Mikami Cup Tournament, one of the more prestigious tennis matches at that time, at the Laong-Laan courts.

The newspaper account says I was at the longer end of a 70-68 Australian-style scoring system — after spotting him a 25-point handicap.

I must tell you a little more about my friend, Doc Tony Sison. He was just nuts about tennis and he was one of our group of oldsters who, I insist, got to live to a ripe old age (he died at 89!) because he kept fit playing tennis everyday.

In fact, he loved his tennis a bit too much. He was a heart specialist and there were a few of emergency calls

while he was on the court. His instructions at his clinic were that he was always out attending to another emergency between the hours of 4 to 6, the critical period when he never missed being on the courts.

During the occupation, Dr. Sison and I used to go in the afternoon to the Manila Hotel swimming pool. He usually swam 60 laps breaststroke equivalent to 1 1/2 kms. while I only made 40 laps equivalent to 1 km.

That was a daily affair and it was the best exercise we could indulge in during the occupation.

I was reminded of old Doc Tony Sison one day when my 14-year-old grandson Jovi came to the club with a gold medal. He had won the national breastroke championship for his age group at the Rizal Natatorium. I was reminded of Dr. Sison because sometime ago he told us of a medical theory. According to him, the dominant genetic characteristics of a person jump one generation, that is to say, a grandson takes after the grandfather, not the father.

As a horse doctor, I never subscribed to this theory. The stud farms have pedigree records showing that offsprings sired by champions do become champions, too.

But now that my grandson Jovi is showing the makings of a nationally ranked athlete, I am about to believe there might be something after all to Dr. Sison's theory of jumping genetics, namely, like grandfather, like grandson.

40

THE 50-THOUSAND-PESO MAN

Enormous fortunes were built from handsome profits out of surplus items.

IT'S STRANGE how some incidents totally unrelated to your calling could profoundly affect the direction of your life.

Take my case for instance. A mutiny was brewing aboard several U.S. merchant ships in Manila Bay sometime in 1945 and because of that near-mutiny, I became a heavy equipment man the rest of my life.

Here's how that happened:

When the Japanese abruptly surrendered in August of 1945, several LSTs each carrying enough supplies to provision a battalion combat team, were anchored at the Manila Bay awaiting orders to move on with the invasion forces to Japan. Since the war was over, impatient crews of these merchant ships wanted to go home. They were threatening to mutiny if not allowed to go home, but fast.

So, in desperation, the officers in charge of the U.S. Foreign Liquidation Commission decided to dispose of the

cargoes which included jeeps, trucks, road-building equipment, supplies, foodstuffs, lumber, medicine — you name them.

I was at the Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines building one day, briefing the Chamber officers — who then included the chamber head, businessman Gil Puyat and former banker Miguel Cuaderno — on the fine points of rice trading when two U.S. army men walked in. They said since the chamber was engaged in commerce, how's about the chamber buying 50,000 tons of assorted cargoes lying in the bay? Why not, indeed

That was how the Chamber of Commerce Syndicate was born. Some 35 of us chamber members and affiliated firms pooled our resources and formed a syndicate.

Perhaps because of my reputation as a martinet at the NARIC and because they knew I could gather the necessary personnel in a jiffy, the group propose that I be named manager of the enterprise.

At first, they offered me a pay of ₱12,000 per annum. I told them they got to be kidding. My last item at the NARIC was ₱18,000. So they upped the ante to ₱24,000. Still no go. What about 36,000? It was getting warmer, but I had a feeling the market could bear more, so I still held out. But when someone mentioned ₱50,000, I at once said "Call" before they could change their mind. I think that at that point in time, the ₱50,000-item set a record of sorts for an erstwhile bureaucrat.

LOOKING BACK, I now feel that that item was a bargain, considering the profits we made for the syndicate.

My first job was to nail down our financing requirements. Our estimate was that we would need about ₱5,000,000 in cash to be able to bid for the entire lot. The syndicate set ₱400,000 as initial capital. We approached the National Trading Corporation to join the venture and that government agency pledged to come in to the tune of ₱1,300,000. The balance would be borrowed from the Philippine National Bank. That was our financing scheme.

When the call for cash was made around the end of November, 1945, the following members of the chamber or affiliated firms, with their corresponding investments, joined the syndicate:

1.	L. R. Aguinaldo	₱100,000
2.	Victor Buencamino	80,000
3.	Rafael F. Roces	80,000
4.	Gonzalo Puyat & Sons, Inc.	50,000
5.	Baloro & Co.	50,000
6.	Gregorio Araneta, Inc.	50,000
7.	M. C. Hernandez	50,000
8.	Ernesto Escaler	30,000
9.	Toribio Teodoro	30,000
10.	Lino Gutierrez	30,000
11.	Manuel Lopa	30,000
12.	Moises Villamaria	20,000
13.	Alfonso del Rosario	20,000
14.	Irene Santos & M. S. Calayag	20,000
15.	Cornelio Balmaceda	20,000
16.	Florencio Reyes	10,000
17.	C. A. Santiago	10,000
18.	Mariano Salazar	10,000
19.	Severo Tuason	10,000
20.	Angeles Madrid	10,000
21.	Lucero, Sanchez & Co.	10,000
22.	Pablo Sarangaya	10,000
23.	Divisoria Market Coop. Assn.	10,000

24.	M. T. Sebastian	10,000
25.	Muños Trading Co.	10,000
26.	Antonio Floirendo	10,000
27.	Oriental Trading Co.	10,000
28.	Cavite Federation of Retailers' Assn.	10,000
29.	Moises M. Colcol	10,000
30.	Matias Fernando	10,000
31.	Far East Trading Corporation	10,000
32.	Lorenzo O. Vidad	10,000
33.	Pedro J. Ocampo	10,000
34.	Leonardo Eugenio	10,000
35.	Mariano V. Concepcion	10,000

Word spread fast among my friends about my heading the syndicate and a number of them asked me to let them in on the deal. That was how the capital listed under my name rose from my own ₱10,000 to ₱80,000. My old friend, Eddie Tait, the former fight promoter at the old Olympic Stadium and later one of the proprietors of the Sta. Ana race track, insisted that I invest ₱20,000 of his money. Mrs. Esperanza Osmeña handed me ₱10,000 and so did my former NARIC boss, Don Vicente Singson Encarnacion. They just handed me their checks — no receipts, no nothing — and their money went into the kitty in my name.

My next task was to secure a loan from the PNB. I knew a little bit of my way around that bank because I was a director there before the war. I was ushered into the office of the Executive Vice President, Mr. Manuel "Charley" Marquez. I told him what the deal was all about.

"Who will run the business?" Marquez asked me.

"I'm the manager," I replied.

"That's all I want to know," he said. The next day, I was looking at a PNB cashier's check for ₱2,400,000. I

wasn't sure Charley knew what he was getting into. And neither did I.

Day after Christmas of 1945, I signed the contract of sale with the Central Field Commissioner for the Pacific Area, Office of the Foreign Liquidation Commissioner. The total purchase was ₱5,016,000, pretty close to our original estimate.

Although we were given a manifest of the cargoes aboard the five ships, we took a big gamble. The contract stipulated that we were buying the goods "as is", and that the seller "makes no guaranty, warranty or representation, expressed or implied, as to kind, size, weight, quantity, quality, character, description or condition of any of the property, or its fitness for any use or purpose . . ."

The contract called for the unloading of all cargo within a staggered period ranging from 15 to 45 days, with a penalty of ₱10,000 per day of delay.

But I was a horse doctor, not a stevedore, and only when I started to try and find out what was meant by LST did I realize that my job was not going to be a picnic. A daily penalty of ₱10,000 for any unloading delay scared the daylights out of me. So I ran over to an old friend from the Luzon Stevedoring Co., Col. Pete Grimm, who had come in with the liberation forces, and I asked him if he could help me unload all five ships within the stipulated 45 days.

"Are you crazy?" Old Pete Grimm snapped at me. "There are not enough lighters and barges at present in the whole Philippine archipelago to do that kind of a rush job." But he was sympathetic and he made available to us whatever his company could spare in the way of steve-

doring equipment and crews. He was shaking his head. "Good luck, Victor," the colonel said in a tone of pity.

One day, I took Pete Grimm out to the Wallace Field. He could not believe his eyes. All the 50,000 tons of cargo from the five LSTs had been unloaded. And on time, too!

By now we faced a still more sticky problem. The precious cargo had to be summarily dumped onto the Wallace Field, out in the open. No fence, no nothing. We had to go outdoors because there was not a square foot of warehouse available to us within artillery range of Manila.

So I ran over to Camp Murphy (now Camp Aguinaldo) and saw then Defense Secretary Alfredo Montelibano. Could he help us poor Chamber people secure the 50,000 tons of cargo, I pleaded.

"Monty" was no less dynamic than was Charley Marquez. He fired orders to his aide and the next morning, a full company of Philippine Constabulary troopers had secured the whole perimeter of Wallace Field.

In the meantime, I needed a staff real quick. One of my old habits was to file neatly away anything in the way of records that passed through my hands. Somehow, with the war and all, I had kept somewhere a bound collection of the information sheets of most of my key people at the Department of Agriculture and at the NARIC. Within a week, I had four former bureau directors working with me: Angel Arguelles of the Bureau of Science, Jose P. Dans of the Bureau of Lands, Dr. Gregorio San Agustin, Bureau of Animal Industry, and Dr. Santiago Y. Rotea. My assistant manager was Secretary Cornelio Balmaceda. Some 30 key people from the old NARIC joined us in no time.

We were most of us former bureaucrats, but I tell you, bureaucrats in those days were no goldbricks. Business was humming in no time.

Our main job was to inventory the stock that could be processed at the field so that the board of the syndicate could allocate said stock among the member investors. Right off the start, a formula had been evolved for partitioning every assortment of items in proportion to the capital contribution by each member. It was then up to each member to dispose of his allocations in the open market.

And what a market it was!

After three lean years of Japanese occupation, the people were simply starved for just the kind of items that the syndicate was selling. I believe it is safe to say a number of syndicate members eventually built their enormous fortunes from the handsome profits they made out of this one-shot deal. My backers, Eddie Tait and Mrs. Osmeña, got back at least ten times what they put in by the time the liquidation was over.

The syndicate operation was so successful that we were able to liquidate our 60-day obligation with the PNB within 45 days. In less than a year, all the 50,000 tons of merchandise were disposed of.

AFTER THE SYNDICATE, I got stuck to heavy equipment for good.

One day, I ran into an American businessman named William E. Cranker who knew something about heavy equipment. He had in his pocket a letter of credit for 10 million dollars and he was looking for road building

equipment, such as graders and dozers, to be shipped to Argentina.

So, we organized the Buencamino-Cranker Corporation (BUCRA). We bought all the surplus heavy equipment we could lay our hands on, including a full depot of spare parts in San Fernando, La Union. Our main stock in trade was to recondition the equipment, give them a sparkling coat of paint and ship them off to points far and near, mostly to Argentina, Lorenzo Marques in Africa and Australia.

When some agitators among our laborers threatened a walkout, we decided to close shop, only to organize a new outfit with a high-sounding name: Philippine American Machinery Equipment Co. (PAMEC). It carried on where BUCRA left off — only on a much bigger scale.

MY ADVENTURES in the surplus property business opened my eyes to a grand scale graft and corruption that was going on. One day, while conversing with President Roxas, I warned him against the government's handling of the mess. I urged him to dispose of everything in one stroke and forget about the government's trying to go into the surplus retail business.

What the President told me was an eye-opener. "Victor," Roxas told me, "I know there are bound to be anomalies, but let's give these poor government people a chance to get rehabilitated. Most of them have lost everything they had in the war."

The way President Roxas put it, I was certain he meant this policy of compassion to be a temporary relief. Looking back now, I am afraid President Roxas committed

a little error of miscalculation. For the propensity to grab among government people appeared to have worsened with the years. Which made me think my counsel to the President was on target.

Friends close to President Roxas told me it was the President's plan to clean house during his expected second term and to really bear down on the job of getting the economy stabilized. His sudden death was a calamity to the nation.

IN 1935, I ORGANIZED the American Machinery and Parts Manufacturing, Inc. (AMPARTS) which I still operate to this day. We have a plant in Pasig where we manufacture undercarriage parts for crawler tractors. We have 50 employees, mostly skilled machinists. It had not been a very profitable business, but I like to think we have been able to save some foreign exchange for the country in terms of parts that would otherwise have had to be imported. Our customers are mostly large extractive firms using tractors: mining companies, road contractors, loggers.

It has been a long, long way since I got my diploma at Cornell, fired with the ambition to help propagate the science of improving the health of animals in my country. But I must say at this point that my interest in the profession has never waned. I am still on the advisory body as professor emeritus for the College of Veterinary Medicine at the University of the Philippines. The exigencies of making a living and grappling with problems of our work-a-day world had pulled me away from the profession, it is true. But at heart, I'm still a horse doctor and I am happy that most of my friends know me best for being one.

41

IN RETROSPECT

Every generation has its own task; I think my generation has done fairly well.

AND SO I come to the end of memory lane. The historian, Will Durant, once observed that writing binds the generations together; that through the written word the lore of the dying is handed down to the young.

"Let us, before we die, gather up our heritage and offer it to our children," Durant said, in the way of an ordain to those who, in the eventide of their lives, would use the written word to help preserve the values of the past.

I like to think that between the covers of this little book I am leaving behind to the young some little morsels worth adding to the numberless lores of my generation.

I THINK EACH generation has its own great task.

It was the task of my father's generation to lay the foundation of our nation. The task of my generation was to start building on that foundation.

What I have attempted to record in this book is the story of one obscure man's role in the great task of nation building.

This, then is the thought I would like to leave behind to my children and the generations following them: it takes the sum total of the efforts of all the people, from the lowliest to the highest, to build a nation and I think it is the quality of those efforts that makes a nation great.

That is why, no matter how lowly my job, I always tried to do it well.

I thought it was important that in my first job, as a young man barely 18, I should do a good job of segregating the sick hog from those fit for human consumption. I felt I was safeguarding the health of the people.

I thought I was doing something important, too, when, in my next job, I stuck a thermometer all day into the rectum of cows to record their temperature. My work had to do with determining which cow was fit to be bled for the manufacture of rinderpest serum.

As a full-fledged veterinarian, I did not mind sticking my arm into the bowels of a stricken horse to claw its feces with my bare fingers. My work was to cure ailing animals, and I thought that job was mighty important, too.

Nothing made me feel happier than seeing my students at the College of Veterinary Medicine in the University of the Philippines receive their degrees for I knew I had helped train them so they could in their turn carry on the protracted battle against rinderpest and other animal diseases.

I LIKE TO THINK I had left an imprint of sorts when I was thrust into the government service as director of several bureaus and, finally, as undersecretary of agriculture and commerce. I insisted on enforcing discipline. I strove for efficiency to the point of being branded a slave driver and a martinet.

Many were those who thought they suffered under my supervision only to realize when they themselves assumed positions of authority that I did them a lot of good by driving them so hard early in their careers.

I like to think that, on balance, my generation did not do so badly.

My father, Felipe Buencamino, Sr., had a vision for the generation of his children. He wrote in his memoir that the main reason he decided to cooperate with General Arthur MacArthur in the pacification campaign was his fear that a prolonged guerrilla war might be fatal to the next generation of Filipinos.

Protracted warfare, my father thought, would prevent the generation of his children from acquiring an education. "Kept in ignorance," he wrote, "our children shall become like Aetas who were driven to the hills by the migrating Malays."

In florid Spanish, my father added: "Our people are capable of pursuing great careers and occupying high positions. Their urgent need is education in the sciences and the arts which is the only means of surmounting the difficulties that beset life."

As it turned out, his sons became precursors in the great American effort to give every Filipino boy a chance to acquire an education.

I WOULD LIKE TO comment at this point that while it has become fashionable for present-day commentators to knock the Americans around, it is my strong feeling that on their record of promoting mass education alone, every American can be justly proud of their forebear's performance in the Philippines.

My father had vision of my generation occupying positions higher than those open to the few educated Filipinos of his own generation. It was a cause for satisfaction to him that within his lifetime, he saw Filipinos gradually and steadily succeeding their American mentors in just about every position in the government.

It was the task of my generation, under the leadership of Manuel Luis Quezon, peaceably to seek the freedom and independence of this country. That has become a reality. I think that the attainment of autonomy was the supreme achievement of my generation.

Then came the last great war. I'm afraid something snapped.

It was patriotic to steal from the enemy; to sabotage him. The only trouble was that long after the war was over, it seems that the stealing orgy went on, not the least among those in positions of authority.

And meanwhile, with the country in utter ruins, with almost everyone losing everything but the rags on his back, the desire to possess material things became a pervasive obsession.

The war had changed the ground roles. The prewar brand of integrity among people entrusted with the responsibility to govern seemed to have been destroyed, along with many other values, by the insanity that was the war.

From the sideline of concerned retirement, I watched in anguish the progressive deterioration of the democratic processes that my generation had so painstakingly started to build in this our land. With every succeeding election, vote buying became more rampant. Terrorism reigned in many provinces, often with the acquiescence of the men at the top.

Quezon once said he'd rather have a government run like hell by Filipinos than a government run like heaven by Americans. It is a tragedy that the government run like hell came so soon after Quezon had gone. How I wished he were still around to lead us when we most needed a true statesman for a leader.

AND YET, I'M confident that all is not hopeless. I have little doubt that the coming generations of Filipinos will more wisely use their power to give themselves the kind of government that can best bring the good life to our people.

I have watched with admiration how our young people today acquire superior techniques. The distillation of all the wisdom of the ages is available to them. Theirs is a world of computers, before them the age of space.

That is why I think the younger generation of Filipinos can do much, much more than my generation had ever dreamed of achieving. But my prayer is that they will not forget what I think is a most priceless legacy that my generation has left behind: integrity in public service.

IF I WERE to freeze on canvas any moment in all my more than 88 years of journey on this planet, I would frame two incidents for my progenies to remember me by.

One was my steadfast insistence that I be given not a cent less in pay than what an American veterinarian was getting back home. I recall that my demand was an utter heresy at that time. It caused quite a commotion at the highest levels. I have copies of the heated exchange of urgent cablegrams on my case between the Governor General and the War Department.

I am proud to record that I was perhaps the first Filipino to break this race barrier and I would like my grandchildren to remember that story as my legacy to them.

I feel gratified, too, to have been privileged to accompany Governor General Francis Burton Harrison and Senate President Manuel L. Quezon on that memorable incursion into the forbidding sanctum of the Lerma cabaret where no brown man ever was allowed to enter before.

I like to think that that was a benchmark in our people's bitter struggle for equality — and dignity!

AND WITH THAT thought, I rest my case in behalf of my generation.

So much for the sermon. Whew! I'm glad that's out of the way!

And now for a parting word: It has really been fun doing these memoirs. No sweat, not when you are 88 years young.

Right now I'm taking notes for Volume II. It will cover the next 88 years! That's why I am so busy. I have no time to grow old.

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